

SCREEN

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SEYMOUR CHATMAN

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SEYMOUR CHATMAN, Professor of Rhetoric at the University of California, Berkeley, received his Ph.D. degree from the University of Michigan. Among his works are *A Theory of English Meter*, *An Introduction to Poetic Language*, and *The Later Style of Henry James*.

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EDITORIAL

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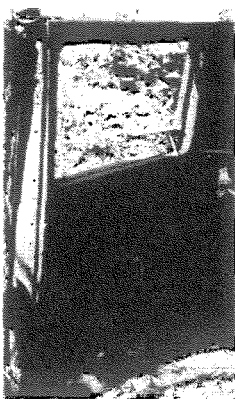
Some people regard as 'independent' any film or television production not directly financed by the commercial film and television industries. We, however, are concerned in this issue of *Screen* with a sector of production that is producing 'a *different* kind of cinema to the mainstream — different in its aesthetic and political aims, not just in the source of its financing. Though this cinema may be seen as culturally marginal, both in the sense of resources devoted to it and its impact on mainstream culture, much important work has been done. A production and distribution sector with a growing number of alternative outlets already exists. Radical aesthetic work which struggles against naturalisation, which defamiliarises, which does not take representation for granted has been developed together with exhibition practices concerned with changing the audience's relationship to cinema. This work, particularly as developed in the IFA (the Independent Film-makers' Association) has taken two directions: the development of alternative or oppositional discourses and practices on the one hand and engagement with dominant discourses and institutions on the other.

The important issue, as Alan Lovell says, is to *specify* what kind of social practice independent cinema 'aspires to be', and that means considering both rigorously as well as realistically the kinds of engagements between spectators and films that are possible at present. While the notion of the social practice of the cinema, that the spectator is a producer rather than a consumer of meanings, marked an important shift in our understanding of the relationship between spectators and cinema, John Caughie is concerned to point out that the idea

of the active spectator cannot be used as a political *guarantee*. He reminds us that Brecht, raised important questions about it even being *possible*, in cinema, for the spectator to actively intervene, changing and appropriating aspects of a film to the needs of a particular struggle at a particular moment. We are particularly concerned with developing discussion and debate in this area. As part of that we publish a discussion between some *Screen* board members and Marc Karlin which covers a wide range of issues important for independent cinema. In particular we would single out the question of left culture — how is it possible for people engaged in alternative practices to influence the political, everyday culture of this country? How can what is essentially a minority concern engage, in Raymond Williams words, 'potential majorities which can become effective majorities'?

At the time of the last Labour government's plans for film and television — plans which included a British Film Authority to manage a restructured industry and an Open Broadcasting Authority to administer a fourth television channel — the IFA began to develop a *cultural* argument for independent cinema. British cinema, they argued, should be funded as an art, as in many European and socialist countries, rather than on a strictly commercial basis. They argued for a cultural policy rather than simply a financial and organisational restructuring of a basically US-dominated film industry. The IFA argued that only state finance and subsidy would enable the development of a viable British film culture. The current IFA proposals, which we reprint in this issue, extend the argument to television. From terms that a liberal institution might reasonably be expected to accept, they argue that it is possible to produce both a greater variety of television, representing a range of 'minority' viewpoints, and fund experimental and innovative work, within the parameters of the Fourth Channel. Both papers are being used as a basis for discussion with the recently appointed executives of the Fourth Channel.

MARK NASH



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JOHN CAUGHIE

'BECAUSE I AM KING' AND INDEPENDENT CINEMA

1 *Because I Am King* is distributed by The Other Cinema, 79 Wardour St, London W1.

PAUL MARRIS, IN his essay in the programme booklet which accompanies Stewart Mackinnon's film, *Because I Am King*¹, has already usefully introduced the film, offering a means of approaching it, establishing the context of its various texts, and relating it to other contemporary film practices. Here, I am less concerned with reviewing the film or analysing its formal operations, than with trying to gather up some of the questions which the film — advertently and inadvertently — seems to me to raise for independent cinema: questions of political address, production and circulation.

Brecht, writing in his *Arbeitsjournal* in 1942 in Los Angeles, has this reproach to make against cinema:

*in particular, i think that the effect of an artistic presentation on its spectators is not independent of the effect of the spectators on the artist. in the theatre the audience regulates the performance. the film has monstrous weaknesses in detail which seem unavoidable in principle. there is the delocalisation of sound; the hearer has first to put every line of dialogue into a character's mouth. then there is the strict fixation of viewpoint: we only see what one eye, the camera, saw. this means that the actors have to act for this eye alone, and all actions become completely unilinear, and so on. more subtle weaknesses: the mechanical reproduction gives everything the character of a result: unfree and inalterable. here we come back to the fundamental reproach. the audience no longer have any opportunity to change the artist's performance. they are not assisting at a production, but at the result of a production that took place in their absence.*²

2 Brecht, *Arbeitsjournal*, 27 March, 1942; quoted in Ben Brewster, 'The Fundamental Reproach', *Cinetracts*, no 2, Summer 1977, p 45.

Ben Brewster has already commented on the practical and theoretical implications of this quotation for cinema, particularly for a political cinema, in his article, 'The Fundamental Reproach', in *Cinetracts* no 2.³ I want briefly to mobilise it again as a way of approaching the problems of *Because I Am King*: both the problems which it has, and the problems which it presents to independent cinema.

Brecht's reproach is directed against film as a given thing which cannot be changed by its audience. Not only are theatre pieces modified by their contact with an audience in performance, but they can also be adapted to answer to a concrete historical moment, and can be re-adapted face to face with a specific audience in order to articulate with its specific demands. In this sense, theatre pieces can be appropriated to specific struggles within a precise political moment. Films resist adaptation, cannot themselves respond to the audience's reaction, and are less easily appropriated to immediate struggles. The difficulty is compounded by the separation of the moment of reception from the moment of production: cinema tends to appear as a delayed action, or a retrospective reaction, reflecting on politics rather than intervening directly in specific political events. Think of Cinema Action's film about the Upper Clyde Shipyards struggle, and of the time which separated the film from the event. Or think of *The Nightcleaners*. Given the conditions of cinema's production, and its reception by an audience who cannot change it, there is a certain abstraction in its address which makes it more comfortable with the replaying of past struggles, or with reflections on the relations of politics and cinematic representations. The learning which it produces is more abstract and generalised, and it is this abstraction from the concrete concerns of the audience which seems to be the object of Brecht's reproach.

Whether or not one agrees with Brecht on all of this (one could go to campaigning films for alternative arguments, or to the way films were used by the left societies in the 1930s, or one could try accusing him of essentialism) what his reproach does for consideration of film practice now is to challenge a certain rhetoric of politics which circulates in discussion of cinema, and which is used to guarantee the study and practice of certain cinemas as political. At the basis of this rhetoric is the notion (guaranteed in its turn by Brecht himself) of an active spectator, constructed in a critical position, and participating in the production of meaning. Now such a notion is clearly important, and the idea of the spectator as a producer of meanings rather than simply a con-

sumer of meanings is a crucial shift in the way in which the relationship between spectator and text is thought. But there has to be a nagging doubt that the idea of the active spectator, in the terms in which it has been appropriated for cinema, is not in itself the guarantee of politics or of 'Brechtianness'. Brecht's reproach, and much of his practice, suggests a less comfortable, more effective, activity on the part of the spectator. The spectator's activity does not simply participate in producing the meanings of a text which has already been produced, but also has the possibility of changing the text, appropriating it to the needs of a political moment. The terms of process, activity and production are there in cinema's critical rhetoric, but they are a little abstract, and one feels that Brecht might have meant something more concrete. Nor is it simply a question of being true to Brecht: what his reproach might do is to take away the guarantee of politics, and force a political cinema to reconsider more rigorously and more practically the terms of its political address, and the nature of the possible engagements between spectators and films. This is a challenge which *Because I Am King* usefully confronts and allows itself to be confronted by, though its own practice exposes it to the same reproach.

C R E D I T S

Because I Am King,
with 'Lehrstück' or 'Lesson on Consent',
text by Bertolt Brecht, music by Paul Hindemith.
Directed by Stewart Mackinnon.
A Trade Films Production.

Trade Films acknowledges the financial assistance of
Northern Arts.

'Lehrstück' was produced in association with the Goethe
Institute, Manchester, German Cultural Institute for Northern
England.

*A film made in 1979 in Newcastle, brings together material from
a variety of sources including a seventeenth century tale, sections
from a film made on Tyneside in 1943, and a performance of the*

Lehrstück, a cantata written in 1929 by Paul Hindemith with text by Bertolt Brecht, which is performed in the film by the Northern Sinfonia Chorus. The film demonstrates the way in which a number of writers have presented history and politics through their work and asks questions both about the context in which the work was produced and the form in which it was presented.

(Introduction to the programme booklet.)

Because I Am King deserves a certain admiration insofar as it knowingly confronts Brecht's reproach at its most difficult points: 1) it takes as its reference a concrete political and economic moment — the current 'de-industrialisation' of the North-East of England; 2) it confronts Brecht's practice in its most radical form in the *Lehrstück* or 'Learning Piece'. In so doing it confronts a certain paralysis in cinema's political address.

Brecht's use of the term '*Lehrstück*' changes, and by the time of *The Mother* it has come to refer to an openly didactic play. But in the late 1920s, stimulated initially by Hindemith's interest in forms of communal performance, the few pieces to which Brecht gave the generic title of '*Lehrstücke*' were intended for performance by groups of participants in schools, youth organisations, or Party branches for their own self-education. The principle which informs the work has a lot to do with Brecht's respect for models which both allow the actor (in the broadest sense) to experiment with the performance of actions, and, at the same time, give the actor sufficient detachment to allow him or her to be critical of the action. The participant learns not abstractly, but concretely by testing social actions, trying out positions, even by speaking speeches. In the *Lehrstück*, more than in any other development of Brecht's theatrical practice, the participation of an active spectator becomes a literal fact rather than a theoretical possibility. Indeed, the notion of a spectator becomes redundant, and the piece is made for and by participants:

The Lehrstück teaches by being played, not by being seen. In principle it is not necessary for a Lehrstück to have anyone in the audience; but naturally he can be made use of. The Lehrstück is based on the expectation that the person who acts the piece can be socially influenced by the execution of particular actions, by adopting particular attitudes, by reproducing particular speeches and so on . . . As far as the method of acting is concerned, the instructions for epic theatre apply. The study of the alienation effect (V-Effekt) is indispensable.⁴

4 Brecht, 'The Theory of the *Lehrstück*', 1929; quoted in Stuart Hood, 'Brecht on Radio', *Screen*, vol 20, nos 3/4, Winter 1979/80, p 21.



Now, it is hard to see how such a participatory practice could be available to cinema, and *Because I Am King*, though it presents a *Lehrstück*, clearly does not function as a *Lehrstück*. Indeed what the presentation of the *Lehrstück* by the film serves to do is to indicate the impossibility for cinema of that kind of engagement, that kind of concrete political address: an impossibility which is underlined in the film by the very formality and theatricality of the recording of the *Lehrstück's* performance. Who is to learn from this cinematic reproduction which holds both spectator and participant in stasis? But by using the *Lehrstück*, by confronting it as another political practice, the film exposes the difficulties of its own desire to speak, with effect, about politics. In its inability to appropriate the *Lehrstück* it opens the problem of how political film is to address politics.

This seems to be the question which the film more or less knowingly confronts. What is useful about the terms in which the question is put is that it resists answers purely from the level of the formal properties of the political text, and addresses the physical and institutional conditions and constraints within which the political relations between audience and text take place. These concerns are becoming increasingly important to British independent film-makers and can be focused here by a few notes and queries on the conditions of the film's production and distribution, and on its institutional place.

PRODUCTION: the crucial question of how independent films are to be produced, and how they are to negotiate the relationship of their independence and their funding. *Because I Am King* recognises this problem when it quotes extensively from Brecht's 'Five Difficulties in Telling the Truth', which acknowledges the importance of cunning and strategy in the dissemination of 'a way of thinking that looks at things from the point of view of change and of changing them'.⁵ The *Lehrstück* which forms the basis of the film is the *Lehrstück vom Einverständnis* — the Learning Piece on Consent (or Acceptance?) — which offers an argument in favour of operating in 'the lowest dimension', and in favour of a renunciation of heroic and uncompromising integrity:

*When the wise man was overtaken by a great storm, he was seated in a large carriage, taking up much room. The first thing that he did was to descend from the carriage. The second was to take off his cloak. The third thing was that he laid himself down on the ground. Thus he conquered the storm in his lowest dimension.*⁶

In the face of the heroism which turns compromise into a moral issue, Brecht's politics of keeping your head down seems appealingly realistic. 'Operating in the cracks' is an acceptable strategy, and for independent film-makers to turn the institutional desire for cultural and social prestige to the advantage of 'a way of thinking that looks at things from the point of view of change and of changing them' is clearly not only politically attractive but is also pleausurably satisfying. There need be no problem of principled integrity attached to accepting money from the Goethe Institute or any other Institute. But there are problems of practice which are dangerous for independent film-makers and for the project of independent cinema. Individual film-makers can clearly make the system work for them, using it to their advantage, making films which do address political issues; even simply making films and keeping in employment (since even independent film-makers are not ideal artists, exempt from the problems of wage-earning). But as a system, this kind of funding — and as a strategy, this 'operating in the cracks' — has to be judged also by what it excludes: that is to say, by those projects which are not initiated or not pursued because they are unfundable. The nature of the funding exposes independent film-making to an interiorised 'referral-up' system such as that which operates in television, and whose effect is the homogeneity of the material which is produced: an 'independent product', predictable and self-confirming. Such a danger is not likely

5 Quoted from the film text.

6 Quoted from the film text.

to be eased by the appearance of the Fourth Channel.

My understanding is that Stewart Mackinnon had previously proposed to make a film about the political events of 1956, but couldn't get the funding. *Because I Am King* was supported by the Goethe Institute on the basis of a Great German Writer and a Great German Composer. What are the implications of that? Next time does Stewart Mackinnon use his cunning to get his script funded? Or does he cunningly write into his script something which he knows will be fundable? And who is going to make the film about 1956?

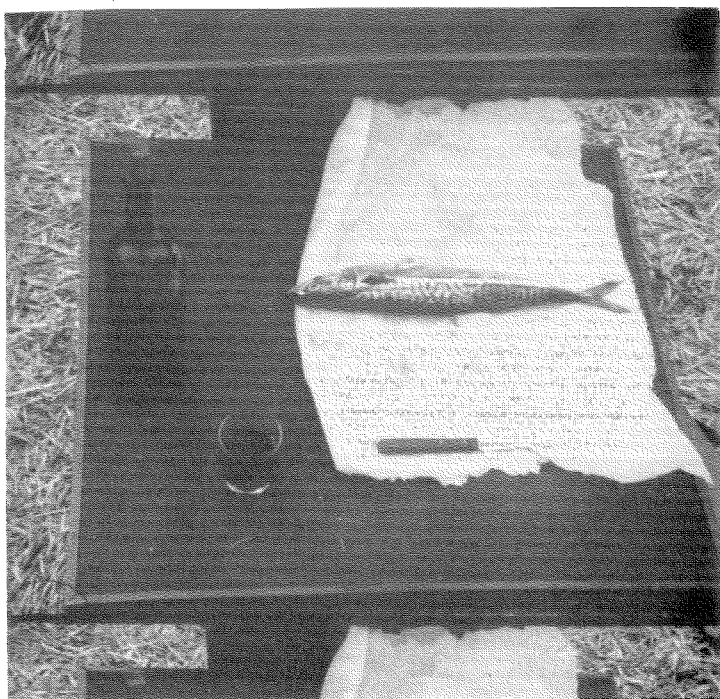
RECEPTION: what space does independent cinema occupy in this country now? Or: who is addressed by independent cinema? Thinking about Stewart Mackinnon's film opens up three aspects of this question:

1) *regional cinema*: produced in the regions, where in the regions will the film be seen, and in what context? More precisely, where, outside London, will it be seen as something other than an isolated event, but as part of a continuous engagement with independent cinema? Without that engagement, what is the relevance or the intelligibility of its questions of address and institution?

2) *art cinema*: the film's cultural anchoring is in what is usually identified as art cinema. This is clearest in the *hommage* to Mizoguchi: an *hommage* which isn't restricted to direct quotation (the sequence on the bridge) but extends across the film, informing its visual appearance: composition, natural beauty (even of industrial landscapes), light, even still life (the composition of bottle, fish and glass, interestingly counterposed against the discourse of Marx). Now what is an *hommage* to Mizoguchi doing in a film which raises the question of how to talk about unemployment in the North-East? What it seems to me to do there is usefully to expose the film to the question of independent cinema's place within cinema: its relations to a culturally and socially exclusive art cinema, the relations of its politics to its art, and most important, the relations of its institutions to the institutions of art cinema. If Brecht's reproach is to be confronted by independent cinema, that is to say, if independent cinema is to work for a different relation with its audience, the question of its institutional space becomes crucial: the cinema would have to meet its audience on different grounds than those provided by the cultural institutions whose primary function is to preserve and circulate the kind of cinema which Brecht reproaches.

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15



Textile workers from the city



Because I Am King does not seem to me to be a film which depends on being accompanied by the film-maker. It does depend quite heavily on being accompanied by its booklet which contains the script and Paul Marris's contextualising essay. What institutional contexts are available to it?

3) *theory*: is the film for an audience or for a reader of *Screen*? At what point does the imbrication of film theory and film-making becoming debilitating? The question does not imply a nostalgia for anti-intellectual creative spontaneity, but simply a hesitation over independent cinema's desire for theory to guarantee it, and a corresponding hesitation over theory's use of independent cinema as its conscience: an interdependence in which the one confirms the other, circulating the debates and defining the terms of access.

These hesitations, then, are about the place which independent cinema occupies, institutionally, culturally and socially, and are focused by an uncertainty about who could use *Because I Am King* and in what context. Made in the regions, it seems to risk unreadability by a regional audience which is unfamiliar with art cinema and with the debates around independence. Existing somewhere between the institutions of art cinema and those of political cinema, it seems usable and most available primarily to theory: to an article in *Screen*. There is a problem of address, which is shared by much independent work: a problem of naïvety in the construction and conceptualisation of independent cinema's audience. Independent cinema and the engaged audience which supports it come to know each other too well.

It seems to me that whether or not one agrees with the terms, independent cinema has to take Brecht's reproach seriously. What the reproach invites cinema to do is to reconsider notions of political address not in terms of ideal spectators, whether active or passive, or in terms of an amorphous and homogeneous Audience, but in terms of specific audiences, in particular places, with particular levels of experience of cinema, and concrete political concerns. Without at least the anxiety which the reproach should provoke there is a real danger that 'politics' and 'theory' will become terms of reassurance in independent cinema's discourse.

Stuart Mackinnon writes:

I note with interest that John Caughie's article does not directly refer to the passage in Ben Brewster's article 'The Fundamental Reproach', which I find useful and particularly relevant to the structure and function of the texts used in *Because I am King*. I will quote the passage in full:

According to Fritz Lang, one of [Brecht's] proposals was that, although what Lang had to do was to make a film which would have a sale within the American commercial cinema, the film should be made so that there would be sections in it which would demonstrate various types of social behaviour; the sections Brecht was particularly interested in were ones which concerned a group of hostages from all classes of Czech society arrested as a result of the assassination of Heydrich, and their reactions to one another within the prison camp. Brecht proposed to Lang that these parts of the film should be extractable, so that later he could take them out of the fiction film which Lang had made, and use them in post-war Germany to assist reconstruction, assembling them in whatever form was appropriate for demonstrating the nature and effects of German oppression in Czechoslovakia to a post-war German audience who had, of course, been deprived by twelve years of Nazi rule of that knowledge.

This proposal of Brecht's which suggests that an extract or extracts from (in this instance) *Hangmen also Die* removed from its original context and used in another time and context to demonstrate 'various types of social behaviour', introduces a radical departure, however speculative, from the conventional usage of 'found footage' as evidence or verification, particularly if one accepts

that the extract can be used to demonstrate more than just 'the various types of social behaviour'. The added significance of Brecht's proposal, is surely the assumption that it would be possible *to effect* the way particular sections were written and presented, that is, *to introduce at the production stage* elements which would be 'extractable' for use at a later date in a different political context — a future, about which Brecht could only speculate. The question of how the extracts would be contextualised and exhibited for political or educational purposes is not discussed in any detail by Brecht, although he does suggest that the extracts be 'assembled in whatever form [is] appropriate', however it is obvious that what he proposes would not be possible within the framework of the film industry as we know it, and that an alternative means of distribution, exhibition and contextualisation, with new audiences, would have to be devised.

Clearly the demonstration of various types of social behaviour for a political purpose which Brecht was talking about, has never been central to the concerns of the commercial industry. Taken at 'face value', if, as Brecht proposes, the 'extract' can be used for a purpose other than that for which it was designed; used with a different audience in a changed political and ideological context (post-war Germany for *Hangmen also Die* and the North-East in the 1980s for *Tyneside Story* and the *Lehrstück*) it challenges, or at least contradicts Brecht's own 'Fundamental Reproach.' It also identifies an important area of work which has not yet been investigated by independent film-makers in this country, apart from a few isolated examples. It does, however, relate closely to recent innovation in exhibition practices developed at the Side cinema, Newcastle, The Midland Group, Nottingham, Birmingham Arts Lab (under Roger

18 Channon's direction), and now by Four Corners in London — where programming unusual or unexpected 'arrangements' of films and film extracts are used with an audience as a means of identifying specific ideological and political issues. Brecht's conception of planning the 'production' within the prevailing constraints for a possible future use — the use of material (the extract) removed from its original or familiar context and reintroduced, with an ideological, political and historical perspective into another — seem useful and interesting. It was this particular conception of Brecht's which informed the structure and use of 'texts' in *Because I am King* and which directly relates to the way the film could be used in an exhibition context. With this in mind, the film was divided into two sections which can be screened separately. This obviously allows for a greater flexibility in 'programming'

and extends the potential use of the film. With the film split into two distinct parts a series of programmes have been constructed using part 1 only of *Because I am King* with a range of films of particular historical and political interest. Part 1 raises a number of questions about the presentation of progressive politics by quoting from various texts drawn from a number of sources and is used in conjunction with the other film in the programme to draw the attention of the audience to these issues and to raise specific ideological and political questions about these films. Seven programmes Using part 1 in this way are:
a) *Peace and Plenty* (Montagu and Megarry); b) *Culloden* (Watkins); c) *British Sounds* (Godard); d) *Paisa* (Rossellini); e) *The Age of Cosimo de Medici* (Rossellini); f) *Far From Vietnam* (Marker, Godard, Ivens etc); g) *The Battle of the Ten Million* (Marker).

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PROBLEMS OF INDEPENDENT CINEMA

A DISCUSSION BETWEEN
MARC KARLIN AND
CLAIRE JOHNSTON,
MARK NASH AND PAUL WILLEMEN

IN THE EDITORIAL to Volume 20, no 3/4 of Winter 1979/80, *Screen* announced a 'reassessment of the role and intentions of the magazine' which, amongst other things, included a renewal of our commitment to independent cinema in terms of the provision of 'a critical "voice" for independent production' and the presentation of 'important but usually unheard voices'. Although this terminology is somewhat vague, it can be read as *Screen's* acknowledgement of the importance of independent cinema while insisting on a critical distance from that sector of the cinematic institution and resisting any overt identification with or support of its aims and practices. Some members of the editorial board, from the outset, have been active participants in the movement of which the Independent Film-makers Association became the organisational concretisation in 1975-76 (in fact, the IFA was set up in 1974, but as a film-makers' solidarity group to protect their interests in the face of a specific issue relating to the BBC). For a variety of reasons, *Screen's* attention to this area of cinema has not always been unproblematic. The most important factor in play here was that by definition *Screen's* primary area of intervention and concern has been that of film and television education rather than production. Consequently, by focusing on the area where educational institutions and practices overlap with the cinematic institution, the magazine has intended to concentrate, quite legitimately and productively for a period of time, on issues relating to the reader's production of the text as opposed to those attendant on the film-maker's production. This is not to say that *Screen's* work has not affected film-making. It patently has, as can be seen from

Introduction

the references by film-makers to the issues discussed in the magazine when writing or speaking about their own work. The point is that the convergence of concerns between film-makers and *Screen* has implied a one-way process whereby film-makers take on board, in addition to the problems generated by their relationship with institutions and practices of funding, exhibition, production and distribution, the kinds of issues revolving around the reader's production of the text which *Screen* addresses. Moreover, *Screen's* address of these issues has been further circumscribed by its involvement in formal, mostly tertiary, education. Again, this does not mean that the magazine's relevance is confined to this or any other specific sector of either formal or informal education, it merely indicates which institutions, ie which practices and discourses preside over the trajectory of the magazine's work. For instance, issues of reading cinematic texts would be addressed differently if considered in relation to the way films circulate within the existing exhibition and distribution apparatuses as opposed to the way they can function in an explicitly educational context. Moreover, if there are pressures and constraints on writers-critics-theorists emanating from the necessity to survive (and perhaps even flourish) within educational institutions, this too will have its effects on the issues singled out for discussion as well as on the way they are formulated and criticised or promoted. However, this attention to the problems of reading as a constituent moment in the process of text construction is by no means to be undervalued. As has become widely acknowledged, partly as a result of *Screen's* work, the construction of a different film culture cannot be equated simply with the setting up of different production, funding or exhibition mechanisms only, or merely with arguments about the purely economic (administrative) control of the means of production. All such changes will be severely limited or even meaningless unless equal importance is given to the production of a different understanding of cinema, different ways of looking and different regimes of pleasure-production. But while it is true that these two constituent moments in the process of text production theoretically have an equal weight, and while it is also true that any change affecting one side of this process will have effects on the other, any strategy for change which ignores the terms of this dialectic of inter-dependence and the way this dialectic in its turn is caught up in other, encompassing and intersecting social practices and institutions, is likely to be more of a hindrance than a force for progress. The IFA founded its organisation on the recognition of this dialectic allowing it to become the

nucleus of a national movement specifically addressing the problem of the construction of a film culture under the programmatic slogan 'cinema as a social practice', opposing this to the consumerist definitions of cinema as entertainment or art propagated by the industry and its ever so relatively autonomous representatives in journalism, advertising, education and other cultural institutions.

It was to discuss issues and problems connected with the relations between *Screen's* work and independent cinema, which in many ways can be regarded as having developed in parallel although occasionally intersecting in the work of individual board members, that *Screen* approached Marc Karlin as someone with a wide experience of all aspects of film culture and particularly of independent cinema. As a member of the Berwick Street collective, Marc Karlin was crucially involved in the making and the exhibition of *The Nightcleaners*, a film that in many ways anticipated future developments of independent cinema. He is a founder member of and activist within the IFA as well as within other organisations such as The Other Cinema (distribution and exhibition), the film union ACTT and The Fourth Channel Group. [PW]

Ireland and 'Nightcleaners'

Screen: You formed the Berwick Street Film Collective in 1972 together with Richard Mordaunt, Humphrey Trevelyan and James Scott. Your first film together was on Northern Ireland, Ireland Behind the Wire (1974).

Marc Karlin: Northern Ireland was a political activity that held us together for four years, it didn't consist only of a film but, for instance, of our arranging a benefit for internees at the Round House in London three months after the institution of internment; of our getting involved in newspaper campaigns and in the *Troops Out* movement; of our going to Belfast to show films such as *October*, *Salt of the Earth* and films for children in Republican areas. We also had to deal with the Special Branch who searched the film cans and took away some footage; the Ministry of Defence also put on some pressure and the ACTT blacked work on the film. During this period we felt very isolated.

One of the strengths of Berwick Street was that you continued producing films even though particular moments were very difficult for you. You have always had a relationship with the labour

movement, but 'out of synch', as it were. Nightcleaners, for example, had considerable co-operation from women in the women's movement yet, when the film was released, there was a lot of criticism from the women's movement pointing up a disjuncture ... between your work and socialist feminist currents.

Well, that experience of Berwick Street is now over. We are now all working individually. Berwick Street remains as a production unit with material and resources used by independent film-makers and is in the process of being reshaped. *Nightcleaners* has had more repercussions in film culture than in the labour movement. One would have to ask the question: how can a film have repercussions in the labour movement, and did *Nightcleaners* address itself to that question originally? Was its enterprise to make a film for the labour movement, which meant that by its very nature as a film it would have to engage with representation, with ideas about film communication, need and so on? It was rejected and severely attacked by the women's movement. A petition was even organised against it. Demands were being made of the film to service the image people had of themselves and of that struggle. The cleaners were never asked what kind of film they would like to be made — which would have been an impossible task, a complex ideological struggle which just a few people cannot undertake by themselves. There wasn't the kind of atmosphere in which this would have been possible. I think it was about two years after that petition that one of the people who organised it went back to see the film, and generously conceded: 'I was really wrong, now I can see the film.' In other words, at the time there were so many constraints operating on the vision of that film, that it took two years to be able to see it. So one comes down to the fact that the film suffers from being caught up in a whole series of uneven developments. One has to see it in the light of when it appeared and what constraints were operating on its reception.

Nightcleaners appears to have been shot in a fairly traditional cinema verité way. Yet I would have thought from your own position as well as from James Scott's, with his formation in the visual arts, that you were both searching for something else. Did you at that time have a notion of reworking the material at a later stage?

No, that developed during the filming. It started, I remember quite distinctly, at a meeting in a pub where a union official was address-

ing Jean Mormont, who is a nightcleaner. And he was saying: 'I can't unionise you because you're not in the union.' She was listening, and I said to the person who was filming: 'Forget about the guy who's talking, forget about the action, just focus on Jean listening.' And it was a shot that lasted all of about six, seven minutes, which is more or less in the film. And suddenly out of that came the problem of listening, of people listening on film, of the notion of documentary always having to follow what seems to be the action and never going behind it. And then, working on the rushes after one and a half years of filming, years of enormous rows and tensions between us and the group, came two problems. One was the problem of how to show labour on film, especially cleaning, which in one sense is not a very 'interesting' task to watch. How physically can you present such an enormous thing as working ten hours in the night? Then emerged the idea of spacing it. The technique of using black spacing was developed while working on an interview. We began to elaborate a core of the work through which it would be understood. And through that you could understand what the film *should* have been but wasn't ie the history of an image. How suddenly — and this is what I wanted to film — the *sighting* from outside a window of a woman cleaning, how that sight is arrested by a consciousness that informs it, looks at it, interprets it, challenges it and wants to change it, and how the whole political organisation can be built around that 'sighting' and consciousness. I wanted the film to be the history of that sighting of that image, but it was too complicated. The second time I tried it was in a film I shot for Chris Marker's group in a motor car factory in Sochaux in France. It was the first time I had ever gone to a car factory. We didn't have very long and I suddenly realised that the workers before and after each action touched each other or looked at each other or something, and then went on working. It was for an *n*th of a second. And I thought if we can capture *that* and ask the audience to imagine what kind of work creates that kind of resistance, then maybe the imaginative capacity can work a little harder. Because if you just show a guy working some machinery, you've seen it before in Godard's tracking shots which obey the architecture of the car factory, imitating the production line. The use of spacing and the idea of slowing down and re-filming started from this engagement with the problem of how to represent working. You want to slow things down, you want to work with a texture, you want to render back to that person a certain physicality, a certain presence, which is always absent from filming at 24 frames a

second. That's what people call romantic or whatever. But the point is that at that stage it was very important for us not to use the cleaners as they had been used before in films, as metaphors for 'it's night, so you see a lot of night cleaners', or for 'class' reconciliation: 'This is Milly talking in a common-sense way early in the morning to her boss' as in a *Mrs Mop* programme on the radio in the 1940s – she was always telling the boss what to do while she's cleaning his desk, the nightcleaner was always presented as the throat of England, voicing common sense. So the concerns of the film elaborated questions of tension between classes, between women, between unions, which means that you have to articulate the film differently.

Going to the Cinema

There have not been many films made about the activity of going to the cinema, about what that experience is like. Many of the films you have been involved with, not only the TV film on The Other Cinema for the Open Door programme (1978), which is most directly and expertly about this, but also films like Nightcleaners (1975) and '36 to '77 (1978) imply a notion of an audience which puts a lot of emphasis on the intensity of response.

I suppose my 'serious' interest, my fascination with cinema developed really after leaving drama school, when I spent near to every night for one and a half years at the NFT. There are in cinema certain rare moments when all kinds of things are confronted inside you. If you're honest with it cinema is a sort of hand to hand combat most of the time, depending on the kind of films you're seeing. Watching *The Deer Hunter* is literally that: you *fight* every single image because you know damned well where it comes from. A different example: do you remember the scene in *Rome Open City*, Anna Magnani sitting on the steps outside her apartment with her Communist lover and she asks him: 'When is it going to end: Is there going to be a future?' and the Communist militant comes up with this big statement: 'We are fighting for a much better world'. And then there is a close up of Anna Magnani and she lends him her belief, like you lend a book, in an amazing passage, which I still can't relate to the fact that she's going to die later in the film. It's sort of a document of time: Magnani, the face and the look: you know that she lends him her belief to sustain his fight, while at the same time in a way retaining the emotion, the logic that's been inscribed in her through the knowledge that poverty has brought, knowing full

well that no amount of priests, Communists, coming along saying 'you'll get up one day', will amount to anything. It's at those moments that you remember where film becomes a testing ground for your own activities, for your own sense of belief.

That idea of film as a testing ground is very important to you?

Yes, its like this church in Norfolk which I've been interested in. In the seventeenth century Puritan revolution, iconoclasts stripped it of decoration and so on. So suddenly you would have been very much on your own in relation to the church, no longer caught up in the obeisance to the Latin Mass, caught up in the incense, that way of seeing man, as it were, only in relation to the high altar. Instead you were given an autonomy — you had to listen to the heartbeat of God in your own heart, you were very much on your own. My fascination with that church brought me to understand certain things that went on when I went to see a film, which is that you're always refusing the Mass, while at the same time yielding to it. Seeing *The Deer Hunter* which is part of the stock-exchange of images and sounds going around now, involves a kind of different combat than seeing *Rome Open City* or a silent film or a Humphrey Jennings film, because the questions are different, obviously. But the combat is still there wherever you go. Involvement, projection, need, desire, are very real in cinema. Cinema is an area where, if you like, certain sacraments happen. You can have agnostics, atheists, believers, but all of them using that time out, that one and a half hours, that specific area for all kinds of combat. It's odd that after a film you can travel home in the Tube with people you don't know who have been to the cinema and you know that you are all more or less retracing, reworking a film — certain things are being renewed, certain things are being reunderstood, renegotiated, and then it's forgotten until the next 'sacrament'. The awful thing is that people don't keep diaries of how they see film, they don't write about how they see films. When the curtain opens there is a kind of comradeship even amongst the most disparate people in the cinema; and if people really knew how important going to the cinema was instead of dismissing the memories of themselves watching it, and actually wrote about the experiences, it could be amazing. This side is always missing when people talk about photography. Just think how very few documents there are of people saying 'I saw a photograph', what it must have been like for people to see their boss there in the work place all the time.

In the 1940 going to the cinema was a major activity — people went two or three times a week. Since then the experience of going to the cinema has changed — television is one thing that has changed that relationship, yet there seems to be in what you say a desire to recover that earlier, pre-television experience of cinema.

If people started really reflecting, formulating, having some conception of themselves inside a cinema, then the cinema would have to change. It is precisely that refusal to be conscious of it that makes for certain repetitions. If you were to see *Close Encounters* and then write about yourself in *Close Encounters*, you might not just immediately have to go and watch *Alien*, — on the other hand you might.

You put a lot of emphasis on certain kinds of pleasure generated by dominant forms of cinema. Would you hold to the need to transform that notion of pleasure in cinema, to include the possibility of reflection in that experience?

Absolutely. Those practices have to be transformed qualitatively. I mean the cinema that I want to engage in and work with is to do with the possibility of calling on a sensibility of yourself, of being more conscious, more open. We have now to work with images, to rework images, to refind ourselves in front of the cinema; by going into the past, to see past documents, past images, to reframe those past images, in order to see what goes on in the archive. The continuous flow and exchange of images that is going on now in television, cinema and newspapers, this continuous assault, this binding, this holding on to people, has to be changed completely by the way you work images. You have to consider the amount of things that have been seen in the past and the amount of things that have become immemorable — you have to see images like monuments or tombstones and say, what do they call upon in you as a viewer, as a relay, you who have been so transient, hopping from one image to the other, from one programme to another, from one film to another?

Your notion of engagement with dominant notions of pleasure in the institution of cinema as it has developed historically and reworking that is clearly very different from the position of someone like Peter Gidal who seeks to negate that area.

There is a story about Bresson in an interview being asked: 'How many films did you see in the last month?' 'Oh', replies Bresson, 'I

don't go to the cinema ever'. So they hired a private detective to follow him around, and apart from the fact that they discovered that before going to a screening he looked at himself in the mirror to comb his hair, they discovered he'd been to something like six or seven films in one week! Now I think that a lot of Gidal's propositions are of self-denial. I don't believe anybody can be so obsessed as he is about the dominant cinema and not get pleasure from it. I think in his written work he wants to be seen as a person that is rigorous, whole, with no ruptures, no fissures, no invisible ink. I do not think *Screen* should have published the article by Peter Gidal, without inviting independent film-makers to reply to it. I do enjoy certain things with him and do recognise his force as an iconoclast in the liberal academic area. But at the same time what he has to say is extremely sectarian and extremely negative and in the long run is extremely damaging to the whole activity of independent cinema. His refusal to connect political activity and enthusiasm in cinema for instance. It's to do with asking questions that are unresolvable, not living in your time but always attempting to transcend it. It's not just Gidal of course, it has a lot to do with the Left concept of Utopia, and with the idea that you've already 'arrived' at the correct position but it seems that nobody's followed you so you might as well stay where you are and ensure that they stay where they are, 'in the wrong'. It doesn't recognise how you live politically in and of your time, it reinforces certain kinds of academic discourses. It's a matter of how one conducts one's struggles.

I think we have to accept that it was an unfortunate piece to have published for the way it caricatures and divides the independent constituency. But it is not just a matter of Gidal: the piece was accepted by Screen and as such indicates Screen's notion of the kind of intervention it wanted to make at the time. And of course it was the experience of discussing that piece that has made us re-think our relation to independent cinema.

'36-'77'

Memory is obviously a central concern of yours, not simply as nostalgia, but as a re-working, a transformation even, of the past. Perhaps we could discuss this in relation to '36-'77 and questions around representation.

I should just say that the film was a group production — I worked on the film with James Scott and Humphrey Trevelyan — and as

such I speak personally and not on behalf of the group. To me '36-'77 is very important for the way it changes the understanding of how you live with representations. The normal film or television experience leaves you without any trace, it doesn't hurt-you at all to look at it. With '36-'77 I realised how people desperately desire a certain normality for film. It's such an obsessive need, and when for instance political people see the idea of rendering their politics *visible*, it completely breaks them apart. A film does test how real your politics are, to the extent of confronting you with something that breaks the very boundaries in your writing. Film acts as a sort of dislocating lever. There's a lot of left rhetoric about personal politics which is actually a refusal to take personal politics seriously — it's a refusal to dismember yourself, to re-think, re-phrase, re-constitute yourself in the light of your actions and the things in front of you. It's a refusal to see age, to see change, to see distances . . . always taking the same photograph of yourself, wherever you are. How can you make a political intervention on the left if you're not prepared to put yourself on the line? Politics as a learning process is about how you live with pessimism and how you work on yourself in relation to that pessimism — forcing yourself to read bad news every day and then elaborating the possibilities of liberation, demanding an invigoration, a sense of determination, from film.

That reminds me of a similar idea in Fortini¹ where he talks about the necessity of pessimism before you can begin to understand anything, a necessary attention to the minutiae of change.

That's the body, isn't it? How against this photograph of your body do you relate things that you live with, things that you yield to. People obviously can't do that continuously but it's important to be able to work out the kind of solidarity in which things are possible and to refuse the automatic answer to that kind of pessimism as in the kinds of films which voluntaristically just say 'I'm leaving my past behind'. How do you operate that change in solidarity with others? It's really a question of how you observe change; how you categorise change; how you stop seeing change in apocalyptic terms. The women's movement at least has been able to start giving us the chartings of that change. What's important is how the left observes change and transformations and allows itself to be changed. But to come back to '36-'77, I have to speak very personally because of my feeling of not belonging, of statelessness, of living as a foreigner and yet being very English

1 Franco Fortini, *The Writer's Mandate and the End of Anti-Fascism*, *Screen* vol 15 no 1, Spring 1974.

and therefore having to re-memorise myself each and every day because I feel that I can't take anything for granted. The film deals with that specific experience, with Myrtle, a West Indian, an exile and a foreigner. It's to do with how, in a sense, working class people feel about themselves. Myrtle, for instance, like me or anyone else, could go through life in repetition formulations, which means that in the act of being mother to her three children, as well as in being the extended mother all around her, she is physically, concretely, every single day, dealing sensuously and blindly with things: cutlery, children, floors, ceilings, beds. It's a continuous repetition within which there's no room for self-consciousness. Her children never ask her: Myrtle — what do you think of yourself today? — or whatever.

Now, to get away from the level of representation in which someone caught up in such patterns of representation would automatically answer from within that pattern, we gradually began to develop two strands. One was to do with an exercise I learnt training as a theatre director, concerned with talking about something very personally but in terms other than the language that person would usually use. For instance, you might have to convey what you felt through the tonality in which you said a neutral word like red, green, or whatever. As for the other strand, do you remember in *Nightcleaners* the woman talking about the number of rooms she has to clean? Through the rhythm of words, 'one, two, three, four, five . . .', she builds distances, so that even a blind person, listening to that, could more or less chart the relationship between the numbers and the spaces of the room, so that the relationship between what is said and what is actually imaged in it has a much closer connection. What we wanted to do with Myrtle was that she should only speak of things which she really felt the need to speak of. Having remembered the thing, and at the same time the act of naming things would have a relationship to possession. So she would recall a tree and then, informed by that memory, she would say 'tree': she would suddenly see herself, and then things were sort of built up sensuously, things became what she was saying of them — like a photograph, like the face built up from dots in an emulsion. If you go up to a lot of working class people and say: 'We want to make a film about you', at best, they will accept a film being made about them in terms of their situation as workers, or as part of a strike, as part of this, or part of that. The representation of workers on film is normalised because it's always surrounded by and held in the situating of them as workers in a recognisable political situa-

tion, and which a lot of people might not be sharing. The idea that they might have other things that would contradict your idea of them never obviously comes into play now. We asked Myrtle to keep a diary, and what came out is that what is unseen for her begins to be seen. Suddenly a consciousness takes place because the act of writing makes it so. And what was incredibly painful, long, difficult, complicated, and still is so in the relationship between myself — ourselves — and Myrtle, was that enterprise of breaking boundaries as to how we see and portray people. The language of Myrtle in terms of what she remembers from her diary and what she says is really political poetry, a restoration of sensibilities that have been totally bombed out by that informational level on which they are normally spoken.

What part did refilming have in that process?

It was James Scott's idea to have the portrait — and I want to say how much James' work both before as well as after the Collective influenced and inspired us. It confirmed my feeling of seeing things too quickly, too fast, of being too safe. Certainly there were things that I was continuously missing in life, let alone film, and film had to have within it a relationship to what we were missing outside it. We filmed the portraits in super 8, on a time lapse. During which time I was asking of Myrtle to 'print' things on it, as it were. I've always been struck in early portraiture by the idea that because of the low speed of the emulsion, people had a long time to compose themselves. And therefore it was *they* who were taking a photograph of themselves as much as it was the photographer. And we extended this by taking a series of 'portraits' which were then re-filmed on a further series of time lapses. Now the re-filming is really very complex, because in some ways it is a compensation. It's taking very banal gestures, giving them an optic that you would only see, say, in football matches, in replays on TV. Obviously in football it works for all sorts of reasons. Most goals are so damn quick you can't see them, or there's such a confusion around the goal that nobody can see who scored the bloody thing. It is there also for the immense pleasure of seeing something slowed down — you've got your time, you become much more at ease with what's going on. And all those kinds of techniques obviously operate in our refilming, except that they are not done with football, but with very minute gestures. So in our opening, in the fifth portrait, it takes ten minutes. It can be accused of being romantic speculation, though it isn't. It is to do with political attitudes towards time, taking account of what is being forced in time. TV and film com-

mercials take a lot of interest in time: through the use of slow motion they force a series of connections between a series of arbitrary images. And the films we make have to develop a political attitude to time as well.

The BFI Production Board

The BFI Production Board's acceptance of your television project would seem to indicate a shift in the Board's attitude to television.

I think the Production Board's recognition of the *Holocaust* project should be seen in the light of their wish to be seen as a productive force within television. And one might add that with the development of Channel 4 there's every reason why SEFT should propose a series of programmes say on cinema for educational viewing.

This happened in the 1960s with The Movies — a series in which people such as Victor Perkins and Peter Wollen were involved — which was shown in the afternoon for educational use and then in the evening for entertainment. That's about the only serious kind of TV programme that's been made about cinema.

The recent history of the Production Board has been marked by its attempt to get recognition as a major production agency. When the British Film Authority seemed a possibility it was important that the Production Board was strong enough to survive potential incorporation. Their funding policy favouring larger budget productions seemed to have a certain logic. At the same time the IFA has constituted itself often in direct opposition to some of the Production Board's policies but has managed to force a recognition of a need for different kinds of funding, small budget grants for more artisanal kinds of production, script research grants, although ongoing funding for groups is still a problem.

Well, the scarcity of resources can render people quite mad. There is certainly a logic which says that to get more money from industry you have to be seen to be responsibly engaging with an audience and not be 'experimental', political or whatever. A logic which leads to a certain kind of budget for film-making. Now if you analyse independent film-making in the same terms and with the same categories that you would have for commercial film-making; in terms of audience figures, influence, visibility and so forth (and I do think the Production Board has judged independent film-making with these categories) then you start the process of making films for £80,000, £100,000 or whatever, which would then

perforce have an art house distribution.

The immediate reaction of independent film-makers to this was: there's little enough as it is, why should it be spent in that way; the Production Board's becoming commercial; it's not recognising the independent political needs, and so on. I think that one then has to analyse how the Production Board and the BFI conducted its politics *vis-à-vis* independent film-makers in the past; how it recognised the work of London Film-Maker's Co-op; how it recognised Cinema Action, Four Corners, Nottingham IFA, Newcastle, Bristol; how it sees its policy in relationship to that; how it sees this kind of production. And one could say then that because it sees it in terms of a judgement, their *sighting* of these productions is filtered and covered by quantifiable and commercial categories that are pressurising the Production Board. The Board is always being motivated by forces outside itself. It's never the instigator, because in the BFI people can't initiate productions. The BFI's not going out and saying: 'We'll commission this, we'll commission that'; rather it's continuously pushed by whatever production proposal comes its way. I think it is politically useless to say: the BFI hasn't done this or hasn't done that, because they perforce have to recognise what actually comes to them. So then you have to criticise their method of recognition of projects and of how they are influenced. Also I think that the IFA has to recognise its own plurality. It has to recognise that within its forces are people who are not collectives, groups, organisations, but individuals who want to make films that cost a hell of a lot of bread—for all sorts of reasons. How do the collectives, groups, organisations express their solidarity with that kind of work? Can the plurality of the IFA be held by that work, or is it going to atomise it? I like to think that it is the job of the IFA to make sure that that doesn't happen. It is also our task to make sure that the BFI does not *dismiss* the last ten years' work but recognises its importance and develops policy from that.

Working for TV

You've managed to fund your film-making by working as a facility company mainly for foreign TV.

We started this business because of economic necessity — if *Nightcleaners* and *Ireland Behind the Wire* were to get made we needed money. We got a contract with an advertising agency, to make a film on the Common Market. They wanted to shoot this in two weeks in six countries, edit it in one week and show it at

the Queen Elizabeth Hall for Edward Heath. It was supposed to show how the Common Market constituted a unity even though each country maintained its national characteristics. For instance, the Italians really dig eating pizzas and spaghetti, and so on. There were a lot of problems with that film and it ended up with us being blacklisted for that kind of work. We then decided to try and get a regular income through working for TV companies. We sent a card round advertising our services to foreign companies.

We live in a market economy, and you have to engage with that. You can't depend on the state funding you get every year, in any case it's *wrong* to think of the state as the only source of money. I don't put this kind of work down either — it gets you into places you would otherwise never get into.

You are now also working on a television project yourself. How was that set up?

It started with a proposal to do a 50 minute film on the American serial *Holocaust*. BBC Bristol were very interested in it and late in 1978 a contract came through to write a scenario which was delivered in January 1978. Because at that time most of BBC2's finances were committed to their series of Shakespeare productions the project had to be referred upwards to Somerset Ward, Arts Controller of BBC2. We had a meeting with Ward who accepted the project. I then investigated the production details which would enable it to be filmed independently and then edited and treated inside the BBC using their technology. I had a meeting with Peter Sainsbury, Head of BFI Production, and Peter Clarke, Head of Purchased Programmes, BBC, who then worked out the possibility of a co-production between the BFI and the BBC.

I think that the work on television that independent film-makers could start doing is the kind of work that can be related to the kind of cinema that we're doing. You can intervene with and in the culture of television, in what is produced, and affect that exchange, how people measure themselves up to television, and you can then provide a further relay in the cinema. In other words, you can't do it in a cinema by itself. Independence is not just a matter of economic independence, it's also the ability to work for difference within dominant institutions such as TV. In fact there are many people within TV who feel that the constraints and language within which they make their programmes are too disconnected from what is going on outside. They can no longer create exchanges with the audience, make transactions.

You seem to be implying that one can make those kinds of connections. If you look at Godard's work for French TV, such as Six Fois Deux (1977), he was doing things previously considered impossible: making films very cheaply and allowing on to TV the discourse of disenfranchised sections of the audience such as the peasant in the Louison section, allowing them as much screen-time as would normally be given to an official spokesman or 'expert'. Yet at the same time, partially because he is so privileged as the great French auteur of the 1960s, one also becomes almost convinced of the impossibility of making those interventions. He can make those interventions because he's Godard, because of his privileged place in French cinematic culture. How do you see the kinds of work you are suggesting in relation to Godard?

Godard has been fetishised to such an extent that his work loses any possible collectivity of expression. He's the only film-maker I know that can photograph himself and say 'I' very confidently. Now it seems to me that the 'I' has to be democratised — it should be possible for a lot of people to say 'I'.

Perhaps paradoxically one of the strengths of British film culture is that we don't have the weight of that kind of tradition. There is no way in which film 'authors' could possibly make an intervention in TV in the same kind of dramatic way as in French culture. There is no space which is not over-determined by those kinds of cultural assumptions.

Since '68, the way people have used Godard points to an absence in their own culture. In working in TV here, I'd like to use images as if they are monuments, not personal fetishised creations. As an example, to use a close-up of Magnani, or Anna Karina looking at a Carl Dreyer film or a piece of Humphrey Jennings and to use them and re-use them. Of course this involves a kind of authorship, but there's a whole host of 'authors' ghosting you in front, behind and to the side of you, all the time you are working. I'd like to bring out a greater democracy of purchase on other people's images, a greater energy, a fraternity, a sorority of images.

But isn't there a problem of images in terms of television. Within the current kinds of fictional television programmes, your project of a critique of a representation of certain notions of memory, as in the Holocaust project, would seem to pose problems about how television functions. You can't talk about separate programmes such as Holocaust without talking about the context in which it is presented and the whole way the institution situates such a programme, the debates that inform a reading of that programme

and so on. It seems almost impossible to make a critique of memory in history because of the way it will be subsumed in that flow.

I think it's pessimistic to think in those terms, because first of all you have to see way the written word works round television. A programme like *Holocaust* for instance, can be guaranteed to be outside television's flow, by being a political event of some importance. For example, politicians in France and Germany have now understood, through *Holocaust*, a use of television history. Schmidt made a speech in the German parliament about it. Simone Weill appeared on French TV discussing it. There was a whole set of guarantees working around *Holocaust* to make it 'outside' television's flow and television's concerns. With historical series that happens quite a lot, because history seems to be the kind of hallmark of television, arresting itself and considering another time, another space altogether.

So, first of all, television programmes can't exist on their own. They have to exist and be mobilised in other areas as well. So I'm not too pessimistic about trying at least to work within television. Flow can only work if there's a lack of perspective. But if television starts to be atomised, broken up, if that difference can be established as a solution I think you'll find it very, very different.

The Berwick Street Collective has been very concerned with technological developments as well as making innovations yourselves.

Yes, when Berwick Street did a film for Barry Gavin on the Italian composer Luigi Nono, we used all our optical equipment, which meant that we did for £1,000 what might otherwise have cost £5,000. The *Holocaust* project will be shot on film and then transferred on to tape and edited on tape using all the new technology within the BBC. Then it will be shown as video, but also as a separate film. Technology in England is really of an extremely high standard. It's changing so quickly that nobody feels quite ready to invest in anything because by the time they've invested, it's changed. I was filming at the Tory Party conference recently when the French writer and politician Poniatoski made a speech about all the scientific developments in capitalism which even capitalists are hard put to know how to handle and how our lives will be transformed within five years, not quite the reassuring kind of thing the Tories wanted to hear, I think. But of course, these changes are happening without most people having any conscious-

ness of it, except as a threat.

Or of any sense that they could control it.

No, absolutely none. Of course, the Left's answer is that capitalism is giving us all the tools to enable us to democratise the means of production and distribution.

British Film Culture

There's a lot of rhetoric about building a British film culture, but this usually doesn't take into account the cultural marginality of cinema in this country and the absence of any easily mobilisable identities around which such questions could be posed.

Why is it so embarrassing to go and see a film with English actors, Agatha for instance? British cinema would be very good if people still made silent movies and no one had to speak. Once English actors speak not only do they speak with an accent and a class accent, but they are definitely trying to say 'I am speaking'. They don't quite trust their own silences, because their own silences are so mobile, evasive. Take Hamlet, and his continuous habit of interior monologues: as soon as English actors speak they try to make themselves definite — there is a certain dishonesty, dislocation. No adequate strategy has been developed in mainstream British cinema to confront all these prejudices and the difficulties of the mobility and interiority of English life.

There is very little questioning as to what the cinema can be about in this country, and if cinema is about any thing, it must be about negotiating the past. There's no so-called 'social-democratic' solution to the British cinema where we suddenly produce a 'New Wave', a national cinema like the 'new' Australian cinema or whatever. There's no way we are going to create a cinema unless we negotiate that past, and in a sense our under-development gives us a unique advantage of producing a cinema that really meets cultural needs.

There is the issue of the film-makers' conception of their audience, the cultural context in which they're working and also the question of representation, of history and culture. Film-makers are beginning to be aware of the first but they have less sense of the history of representation and less purchase on how their own kind of practice can engage that. In a sense it's the business of critical magazines such as Screen to raise these issues.

There has to be some sort of collectivity, not just amongst those who are making films but also amongst magazines and journals, a sense that one is working to some purpose. One has to get over this bitter competition, this putting down, as happened with the initial reception of *Nighthawks* (1979), for instance. It was made with a lot of trouble and there were certain things in it that were immensely interesting. Now why was no one able to write positively about this film? There was no way of *relaying* the life of that film, which is one of the things criticism should engage with — enabling films to live.

The Other Cinema

You have been closely involved with the distribution of independent and oppositional cinema as a member of The Other Cinema's council of management and you were part of the group that established and ran their cinema, the Scala, in 1976. Although TOC had wanted its own cinema in the West End for a long time, largely as an economic necessity to make its distribution work more profitable, the operation of the Scala was conceived rather differently and with very ambitious policies. Although it was effectively in competition with other cinemas opened by independent distributors at the same time, such as the Plaza and the Gate, the Scala explicitly refused to become an Art House. This was partly as a result of the debates within the independent cinema opposing the exhibition of films for one-off consumption and promoting the notion of a social practice of cinema that would stress cinema as a discursive practice addressing the process of meaning production with and for specific audiences. The first national congress of the Independent Film Makers Association had been held in the spring of 1976 and the Scala opened in the autumn of that year. TOC tried to develop alternative, socialist practices around cinema exhibition. Discussions were organised together with screenings, socialist and community groups used the cinema, different roles were being proposed for film-makers and audiences alike. All that work was just beginning to take root when the initial undercapitalisation of the venture together with the British Film Institute's refusal to back such innovative policies, forced the cinema to close in late 1978, in spite of a vigorous campaign by independent film-makers.

In retrospect it seems that the contradiction of having to survive in the market place while at the same time developing a socialist practice of cinema was too much for the project at that time. For various reasons, that contraction forced the cinema to rely on BFI funding and, above all, on the BFI's verbal commitment to independent cinema, which proved fatal. Of course, in an

2 'The Other Cinema
— Screen Memory',
Wedge no 2, Spring
1978.

immediate sense, it was the BFI's refusal of a request for funds which forced the closure, and one would certainly criticise that decision. But doesn't the criticism have to go further? Maybe there weren't enough people who recognised the crucial importance of that work at that time? We were all involved in the debates about the social practice of cinema in the IFA, but those ideas were still relatively new and had little purchase on the situation. One felt paralysed in the face of all those contradictions. There was no real analysis of how it would be possible to save *The Other Cinema's* exhibition initiative.

If you read the account that was given in *Wedge*², of people's opinions on *The Other Cinema*, it becomes clear that although there is an enormous amount of very justifiable criticism of TOC, there was also very little understanding of what TOC really was. It was vulnerable to political criticism but then one must remember that it was the only thing going of its kind and that immense pressures were put on it with its underpaid and seriously over-worked staff and that very little help was forthcoming. But the fact remains that it showed independent British features, that it was beginning to make alliances between different film-makers and audiences. It did hold important debates and it did offer a space in which meetings could be held, where a consciousness of a certain cinema practice could be developed. I think it is true that all the attention was drawn on to the BFI so that in the end it appeared that only the BFI could save the cinema. This was the first time that I came face to face with that lack of understanding, feeling, passion, desire in those guys in the BFI Boardroom. They spoke as if the only thing that could come into their heads were words like defeat, non-possibility, logic, market, economy, and so on. It seemed as if it were a natural force that nobody could do anything about which was working against the cinema. Yet, if you have a notion of British film culture you also have to consider the fact that of all those people who are continuously yawning on about a British Film Industry, none of them came forward to help. I remember going to the AIP and explaining the situation to them, giving them all the details, and they didn't even turn up to the picket of the BFI we had organised. None of the established film-makers such as Anderson, Reisz, Richardson, not even the trustees of TOC turned up at meetings or showed any interest. We had a few inches in *The Guardian*, that is all. The BFI directorate had advised us that there was no point in any further struggle with them for funds because there just weren't going to be any. We, therefore, had to mobilise people outside the BFI

to fight to keep the doors of the cinema open. And in a sense, TOC wasn't yet well enough known outside the area of independent cinema itself to mobilise people such as trade unions and political organisations in support of it, although it must be said that during the two years of the cinema's life, very many political organisations used the cinema and felt that its existence was beneficial to them.

However, what is at stake in what you say is the ability to mobilise support for cultural work outside the constituency of cinema or theatre or whatever. And that we were unable to do, which does raise questions when one is thinking of political alliances. To what degree does independent cinema meet its constituency and in another sense, go beyond it, to get out of that left ghetto and occupy a more central position? So that is the kind of failure we have to analyse in detail. It is a question of how much failure we have had to cope with for so long and how much that has become almost a sediment inside you. Because of all the past history one can go into an action almost half believing that you won't win because of all the blocks that are in front of you. And yet you want to avoid complete depoliticisation, as for instance in *The Left-Handed Woman*. That is a remarkable film in some ways but in another way it is a study in the proposition that the most minute gesture of survival is all that is possible. Don't worry about what goes on around you, just make a gesture of liberation in your own room. A lot of the new German cinema is about coping with these areas of defeat, with that block that is continuously in front of you.

Maybe there was also a problem with the analysis that underpinned the approach to the BFI? In a sense, the IFA was founded on the recognition that institutions are not and cannot be regarded as monolithic. The alliance of film-makers with theorists, teachers, critics and so on within the IFA at least implied that institutions were sites of struggle, that spaces could be produced, that contradictions were constantly in process, as it were, and that there was no such thing as a monolithic block, out there, that one cannot but crack one's skull against. The model of struggle you seem to imply in order to account for this failure is one where you continuously come up against a brick wall; whereas the IFA was founded on a politics of alliances that intersected with institutions, crossing them, opening up spaces, working on contradictions and so on. In a way, that notion of politics rules out the possibility of the once and for all decisive battle, the total victory of defeat, the sense of total failure. Given the kind of analysis one had of the BFI, or the lack of it, together with the expectations one had of

that institution, it would appear almost inevitable that certainly at that time any struggle with them about independent cinema would be lost and that the cinema would close. Nevertheless, the lessons from that struggle, although not specifically discussed, did feed through into subsequent work such as that of the IFA's contracts committee, the development of regional workshops, the expansion of Cinema Action and Four Corners into production/exhibition centres. It now appears that there never in fact was a monolithic block opposing independent cinema — although the opposition was real enough at the time — but only discourses and positions in movement, in struggle. In that sense the campaign was not a failure because the struggle itself helped change the forcefield that constituted and determined the independent cinema movement, producing realignments and opening up new spaces, feeding those developments we are seeing now.

Your criticism of the way we related to the BFI and the lack of analysis has a lot of weight — I have reflected on those issues since the campaign. It is true that I have always been ill at ease with the dialectic you outline. The point is that it was not merely a matter of keeping the doors of the cinema open, but to save what TOC represented, which was not just a cinema but a series of relationships: production, distribution, exhibition, political alliances, cultural work, political work, imaginations that could have been brought to bear on the practices of cinema. That hadn't happened before and hasn't happened since. Because of its specific relationship with independent film-makers and other social and political groups, TOC could have mobilised certain arguments which now are totally absent from the areas of production, distribution and exhibition. TOC was always situating film-making in a context, in movement. That is what we are trying to keep open. If all the things that were achieved at TOC, the imaginative movement and energy it represented and the questions it had generated could have been concentrated on its survival and development instead of just shutting its doors, I think that now we would have been in a very different state.

So, in a roundabout way, I am saying 'yes, that dialectic was at work and has produced other things' while at the same time I am saying that there is a lack that has not been filled. For instance, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith's article on *Radio On*³ is the best thing that has been written on that film and one of the points it makes is that there is no context for *Radio On*. TOC is not mentioned even once in that article, but if *Radio On* has been shown there it would have been a totally different film because it would have been in a

³ *Screen* vol 20 nos
3/4, Winter 1979/
80.

context. Films are affected by the way they are shown and where they are shown, by the enthusiasm with which people are building programmes and everything else. (In fact, I don't think *Screen* has ever addressed itself at all to the closure of TOC.) Alliances, which are incredibly important, should have been made. And although this opens up a whole new set of questions, I think the divisions of labour between film-makers, ideologues, critics and so on should have been engaged with. This has never been done, not even within the IFA. This is the question of how different sectors of work, sustaining contradictions and tensions but nevertheless addressing themselves to the same problem, can combine so that socialism must elaborate itself as an alliance in its richest sense.

As you say, the memory of TOC seems almost to have been effaced. No explicit analysis of the terms and institutions in play has been made and no lessons seem to have been drawn. Although it must be said that practices such as those represented by TOC had been going on for quite a while, based on all kinds of alliances, such as the Edinburgh Film Festival's policies and conferences, Cinema Action's distribution and exhibition practices and so on, although TOC did provide an opportunity to pull all of that together. In a sense, one lesson to be learned from the way the situation changed from the immediate post '68 years to the late 1970s is that however energetically you campaign the result is never quite what you worked for but always somewhat at a tangent, manifesting itself in displaced forms and unexpected configurations. So that one always must be prepared to re-start on the basis of the new situation even if this may mean abandoning the logic inherent in one's own work and re-tracing one's steps. When you suggested that in the Left, criticism of one's friends comes too easily, one must also remember that the Left here has a history of easy enthusiasms and mobilisation. By 'easy' I mean unreflective and trapped in the emotional energy that is merely a necessary precondition for any form of struggle. The problem is how to sustain the split between the requirement for constant analysis and criticism and, on the other hand, the enthusiastic commitment of one's emotional energies. There is a necessary pessimism to be articulated with political productivity because there are always more determinations in play than one is able to address directly so that, even if the hierarchy of those determinations is judged correctly, the effects of one's practice are never quite what one has bargained for. Therefore I would be reluctant to come down too severely either on the tendency towards 'easy' criticism or on the one towards emotional mobilisation, because

they are both constituent elements of the socialist alliance you call for.

The Fourth Channel

The formation of such an alliance is precisely what is at stake in the campaign around the Fourth TV Channel (TV4) which will obviously affect all independent film-making, both the so-called independents who merely want to produce the kind of programmes we have already but to do so outside of the constraints imposed by existing BBC and ITV companies, and the IFA independents whose practices involve a notion of independence as specific difference which we would all support. And yet, it would appear as if the relationship that existed between the BFI and the TOC campaign is being reproduced in the IFA's campaign vis-à-vis the fourth channel. Except that this time we are facing far more powerful institutions than the BFI. Moreover, the 'Independent' Broadcasting Authority doesn't even pay lipservice to the notion of independent practice represented by TOC and the IFA.

Let me answer that in this way: there is a need to analyse what kind of everyday culture we live in. Left activities seem to be cordoned off from everyday culture in Britain. There are some areas of overlap in academia and in places such as the BFI but, these are under constant threat. There remains a very strict *cordon sanitaire* between the Left and the outside world which carries on its everyday activities and culture. There is a fascination and obsession with what the Left does, but they don't produce anything of their own. They only react to what the Left does, responding to it in the most paranoid and abject terms. Because of this *cordon*, we are never able to mobilise and influence outside of our city walls so to speak. The question is then, how able are we, on the one hand, to open our doors, and on the other hand, to produce enough to be able to make an incision in the political everyday culture of this country. Our activities are to be measured by our ability to change the rules of the game and how we can beat the guard-dogs of that everyday culture.

The fourth channel will affect all aspects of independent production. Particularly that tendency which works to establish alternative production and distribution structures outside of the market, because the fourth channel changes the definition of what the market is. One of the IFA's demands is for a foundation to be set up within TV4 to protect independent productions which would go to the wall in the kind of naked market operations which one would expect if the channel were to operate as a

second ITV channel. As part of the Channel 4 Group, the IFA together with other media workers are having to create alliances, strategies, face questions and problems they have never had to face before. Very conservative people are having to come to terms with the notion of independence which up to now they have subscribed to purely in economic terms. In fact the work that the IFA has done up to now — a lot of it the result of Simon Hartog's energy and initiative — is very impressive and incredibly important.

In the Government's White Paper on the new channel it says that it must be innovative in terms of form and content. That can be understood in two ways. In one way, it can be seen as their rationale for having a fourth channel at all, according to the old famous ideological ploy: we have all this British talent here going to waste so we must give them an opening. But it can also be seen from the other side, which is that the IFA in its consistent campaign for a say in what goes on in TV4 has met with some success. The next thing is to analyse in what ways the needs of the IFA meet with a Tory ideology. What are we campaigning for now? Not just for a foundation that will protect the notion of innovation in terms of form and content from the market forces operating in the IBA and in the ITCA companies, but for certain broadcasting freedoms. Bourgeois freedoms if you will, there aren't enough of them. This requires continued analysis of the broadcasting system. Again we must bring into play alliances that go beyond just film-makers. We have to bring in the unions, immigrant organisations, all those who have been the subject of television's concerns but never its producers.

In order to fight for difference in television you have to take account of what has gone on in the past, how television works, what kind of instrument it is, what its specificities are. You have to have some critical force at work in television. I think a lot of independent film-makers are beginning to respond to the issues raised by TV4. There is inevitably a resistance on the part of film-makers to get involved in popular front type activities, a resistance which comes both from suspicion of people in closer touch with market forces, but also a lack of confidence in the importance of the kind of work they are doing. There is now the beginning of a realisation not only that television might fund film production but that it might be possible to engage with television and television's relation to cinema.

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JOHN ELLIS

AT THE FOUNTAINHEAD (OF TV HISTORY)

A major aspect of our culture is its fascination with history. Film and photography are its favoured media as they seem to return us to a sense of spontaneous and intimate presence of events. We have a secure and privileged relation to the events nevertheless, and can use their representation to produce memories or to neutralise them. This sense of intimacy now takes a very particular form in the photographic retailing of history. We try to recover the intimate and personal events which took place across the momentous goings-on of political history. This is not just confined to narrative films and television of the order of *Roots* or *Holocaust*, it is also present in the massive diffusion of photographs from the turn of the century, in books and postcards; the oral history movement; the mania for tracing family histories. My own particular fixation (probably a common one) is with the period immediately before I was born: the 1930s and 1940s, the time of my parents' own 'coming of age'. The intimate knowledge finally sought for in this movement is oedipal; it probably underlies the impulsion towards the discovery of the

domestic at the heart of the politico-historical.

In fiction, this has disturbing consequences. Historic fictions are presented, especially on television, as the personal dramas of a sequence of generations with momentous historical events as a background. The sequence of generations has a twenty-year periodicity: similar dramas recur in each generation at about twenty year intervals. In the construction of a television historical narrative, these cycles tend to be set up so that they coincide with the 'common-sense' periodisation of history. Hence we would see a German romance of a young couple at the end of the first war; the Nazi education of their children and consequent estrangement in the late 1930s; the children fighting, marrying, being killed or imprisoned; their children being born as the symbol of new hope amongst the ruins, the generation of today, liberated from guilt. Thus the ending of two world wars marks the ending of a historical epoch. It is a return to zero, a new beginning. The fictional structure, replaying the drama of the generations, intimately supports a particular conception of history.



Here is more than just a notion of politics somehow disturbing the pattern of individual existence; it is one of political events as a release of titanic energies and emotions quite beyond the understanding of individuals, with a consequent storm which somehow purges national and international life. Those who survive are left with the task of reconstruction and making new mistakes. The deep historic continuities that exist between each period, between for example Germany of the 1930s and the Germanies of the 1980s, are routinely denied by this structure. All sense of continuity and repetition is on the side of the personal and familial. The periodisation of the generations into twenty year cycles confirms the separation of our history into self-contained twenty year spans.

This device itself is not a new one: Noel Coward and David Lean produced such a retailing of British history from 1919 to 1939 in *This Happy Breed* (1944). Yet this film was a major ideological

event, for its 'realism', for its successful suspension of the major social divisions of the 1920s and 1930s. Nowadays, the technique is naturalised, common, and still effective. One aspect of the shock of *This Happy Breed* was that it dared to deal with political events directly in a fiction (eg Robert Newton and Stanley Holloway, the fathers of the piece, driving a bus during the General Strike). Television has changed that. It has made it part of its business to retell history obsessively, through programmes of archive footage (*The World at War*), through investigations of memories (*Heroic Women*, *Yesterday's Witness*), and especially through prestige drama. Television has recently been able to add a sophistication to the procedure by permitting the integration of 'documentary' material into fictions of history. This has not been confined to the use of newsreel footage as an evocation of the events of a period, but has been extended to the so-called drama-

documentary, which is able to use techniques from both genres to present a hypothesis about what really happened. A recent example of this procedure was Michael Darlow's *Suez*, giving us the personal actions of the politicians centrally involved in the Suez crisis.

The filmed or televised depiction of history is a major item in our culture's audio-visual consumption. Its predominant form is one which seeks out the domestic and intimate at the heart of cataclysmic world events. The periodisation of the domestic is combined with and confirms the accepted, naturalised periodisation of history. Fictional and attested material can be freely combined with no particular demarcation between the two. The effect of this particular regime of representation, whose heartland is television, is a difficult one. We do not so much live *in* history as *with* it. We all have knowledge of what happened this century, hazy as it probably is. We all know the images: they have become our

historical memory, a montage of typical 47 shots. Yet this memory is only solid up to the 1950s it begins to fade as it becomes closer to the present. We can conjure up images of miners striking in 1926, miners as long-term unemployed in the 1930s, but miners as mass pickets in 1972 do not coalesce into a memory image, even though the events are more recent and more current. The first two images are composites from innumerable fictional and historical representations. The third image is virtually absent, especially from television. Current affairs and news do not construct history, and hardly ever situate the present in terms of the past,* as this would call into question much of their descriptive rhetoric. Television is persistent in working over

* The difficulty of even finding an expository form for such an account is evident in such programmes which occasionally attempt it, like London Weekend Television's *Weekend World* and *The London Programme*.



48 history for us, yet at the same time it cuts us off from our history. It has two very separate forms of historical time: the history-fiction-epic with its broad scope and twenty year periodisation; the current affairs programme which deals with the events of one month, and loses its expository grip at the distance of one year. One twenty year period falls out of this coverage: 1959-1979: the almost-present, not-quite- past.

Any cinema calling itself 'independent' has to encounter this televisual mode of narrating and organising general political history. We have some films which attempt the analysis of one fragment of history (like *Song of the Shirt*), but very few which take a wider field of analysis. Mulloy's *In the Forest* (BFI, 1978) has been perhaps the most notable of these. It frustrates normal television modes of historic narration by using a wide range of discursive strategies all having a historic edge to them, yet none usually being considered appropriate for history on television: it uses quotation from literary and theatrical sources, metaphoric action, mythologies that it improvises for itself, comedy of various hues. The scope of the film is the movement from Dark Ages to the dawn of the industrial revolution. It is significant that the picaresque characters disappear amongst the workers in a factory at the end of the film; as though the strategies adopted by the film are valid for an epoch remote from our own. The closer the historic period in question comes to our present, the more urgent it becomes to deal centrally with the way in which television works over knowledges, sustaining and creating memory images, soldering the political and the familial melodramas.

Anthea Kennedy and Nicholas Burton's *At the Fountainhead (of German Strength)* develops a complex and fascinating

strategy in dealing with modern Germany. It both acknowledges television's dominant treatments of this history, and rebuffs them. It uses all the major television strategies I have outlined, but refuses their distinctive discursive closures, and places them in a particular emotional register that is alien to them. The result is that the common stock of knowledges gained from television about German history are re-ordered, dislocated from the habitual relations of one item with another. History and its dominant interpretation become available for inspection and reflection once more.

At the Fountainhead is made up of several materials. The first is a personal/familial narrative stretching from 1933 to the present. The central character in this, Johannes Schmidt now John Smith, is a fictionalisation of Anthea Kennedy's father, Val Kennedy, who appears in addition to two actors playing the young and middle-aged Schmidt/Smith. Schmidt/Smith/Kennedy's parents had a lodger in 1933: the Bulgarian Communist Georgi Dimitrov, arrested as one of the incendiarys of the Reichstag fire. Thus a tight knot is constructed around the question of fictional familial dramas at the heart of historical reconstruction. The central character oscillates between a fictionalised *persona* (itself divided between 'the past' and 'the present'), and his factual basis, who himself discusses both Dimitrov and his own history as a refugee. This oscillation is explicit: different bodies speak of and/or act the same experiences. This particular strategy in relation to the problem of remembering of events through fiction and documentary is pulled into the present by the purely fictional device of a documentary-fiction novel which reveals certain ex-Nazis still active in West Germany. One of them, named, is suing



for libel on the grounds that the novel's aesthetic status as documentary-drama calls into doubt its claims to fictionality. A subsequent action by the state prosecutor under a 1976 'Law for the Protection of Communal Peace' is also being contemplated. The book is published by one of Schmidt/Smith's old friends, Kurt Langsdorf and his half-sister Sophie. They visit Smith in London whilst trying to pacify the book's British publisher. They are joined by the other Langsdorf brother, Gerhardt, who remained in East Germany, and, now retired, is permitted to travel abroad for 30 days a year. These characters discuss both their different histories and the effectivity of the book's aesthetic: the very aesthetic that the film is dispersing.

A third element is the use of archive footage, sometimes as illustration, sometimes as evidence that stubbornly refuses to fit what we expect of it, as with the use of East German newsreel material. This has a dubbed translation of the

commentary that makes the origin of the material uncertain. Extending from this, certain events are treated to the technique of documentary-drama, the fictional reconstruction of events which can claim to have evidence for themselves. These events range from those which are attested within the film (the Gestapo search the Schmidt household) to those which, towards the end of the film, are presented as historical evidence in their own right (the German Communist-dominated SPD and its problematic relation to the activities of Moscow).

The final element in this historical tissue is music, almost all of which is a specially composed score by Benedict Mason. Its range of reference is to the 'classical' tradition of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, chiefly to Germanic traditions. Its use in the film makes precise comments on the ways in which this tradition is regularly adopted to provide diffuse 'mood' as accompaniment and counterpoint to voice and vision in

50 film and television. The music regularly refuses this subordinate role: it can make jokes of its own like a startling transition from Brucknerian bombast (over newsreel) to muzak (presumably diegetic, since the setting is an airport). It follows its own logic in that it produces pauses where continuity is usually demanded, crescendos that emphasise inconsequential moments. It is too intrusive to function as background, and too complex to provide surrogate emotions absent from archive footage or staged scenes. One particular moment demonstrates this: Schmidt is cycling in Holland, a sequence that provides a moment of lyrical freewheeling for audience and character. The music breaks into a sudden parody of British 'light' composers — a style that provides signature tunes for eccentric British television programmes like *The Last of Summer Wine*. Schmidt cycles up to a bridge, the music seems to prefigure some kind of narrative crisis, but the moment passes uneventfully. The music is exactly appropriate and yet behaves inappropriately. Music, too, is one of the references for the characters: Val Kennedy is a bassoonist, a fact which eventually draws together his figure and those of his fictional derivatives.

Immediately clear from dissecting the film is that it combines modes of historical exposition normally kept separate on television. It mixes the fictional (the fiction of the documentary novel), documentary-drama and the documentary source for the documentary drama. There is a sliding of modes which never comes to rest: each new sequence has a different status in this investigation of the question of fiction and documented 'fact'. The whole question which appears so simple in *Radio Times* letter column polemics (something is either 'fact' or 'fiction') becomes infinitely more

problematic. Television maintains the working distinction between the supposed modes of fact and fiction only by rigidly separating different modes of programme construction. The appearance of the character on whom a documentary-drama is 'based' within that drama is an impossibility. Their appearance would be confined to a different mode and time-slot: the chat-show interview. With *At the Fountainhead*, the viewer has to discover the status of the sequence being watched from internal evidence. Thus the conversation between Smith and the Langsdorfs is clearly fictional in the staging (tea and an exquisite Black Forest gateau), the construction of the dialogue, and the ability to edit for particular aesthetic effects. The long conversation between Kennedy and Gustel Jansen-Scherchen, who introduced Dimitrov to his landlords, is clearly 'documentary' since each of the characters is slightly uncomfortable; each prompts the other to deliver information that was presumably demanded by the film-makers; and the sequence is marked by the inability of the camera to do more than observe: there is no cutting, no camera movement. The most audacious moment of this strategy of mixing modes of historical exposition is the use of three separate figures for the 'roles' of Schmidt, Smith and Kennedy. Like all audacious moments, it has its own impeccable logic. The film refuses to allow the audience to pull the three characters into a single figure. There is a certain amount of dovetailing of sequences featuring each *persona* at the start of the film, and a ubiquitous voice-over provides certain clues that the characters might be connected in this way. But it is only at the end of the film that a definitive link is provided, by the simple device of having Smith announce that he has a



difficult passage of Mahler to practise, cutting directly to Kennedy doing so. It is the same passage that opened the film, presenting the first elements of the film: music and Kennedy. The device of multiple 'characters' can be suspected or intuited from internal evidence or from the film's publicity, but it is never certain throughout the film's duration. This strategy is audacious, but it is also unavoidable. For what is it that enables us to assume an identity between a young German in the 1930s, a refugee who has taken British citizenship, and the historical basis for these two characters? It is not name, because names are different; it is not body for it is impossible for a man of seventy (with or without acting experience) to play his twenty-year old self without producing spectacular or ludicrous effects that are not required here. Fundamentally, we would expect the three figures to hold memory in common. And memory is exactly what the film is interrogating: the memory of participants

in events, the memory of those who did not participate yet 'know what it was like'. The film disputes this memory, what we normally call 'history'. Kennedy says to Jansen-Scherchen 'What I've always wanted to know is . . . were you responsible for it?', and two sets of conflicting assumptions and memories are inspected for the first time: 'I was always under the impression that you knew who he was'. With both personal and public historical memory undergoing such an interrogation, the convention of the continuity of character over the decades (so essential to television historical fiction) becomes an impossibility.

The status of film as incontrovertible evidence is another belief that is refuted in this movement to interrogate memory. The technique used is not the didactic one of 'proving' distortions and so on, it is rather one of demonstrating the constructed nature of documentary footage without appearing to do so. When the voice-over is giving an exposition of the

52 fictional device of the documentary-novel, we are shown footage of a middle-aged man filmed by clandestine camera in Germany, with some stills and film of a younger man in the company of Nazis. Of course, we infer that this is the same character, and has the identity of the person discussed on the sound-track. Yet this footage recurs in an excerpt from a documentary film (probably East German, though we are not sure), having a different civil identity (name, professional skills and history), yet a very similar historical role. The identity is different, the identity is the same, it depends on what we ask from the material, our level of attention to it. This is not the reversal of our habitual expectations of film material (photograph = real truth → photography = false evidence), but rather a disintegration of their basis. For we do not ask for a simple piece of film as evidence, we require a particular integration of various levels of sound and image, supporting each other to provide 'evidence'. This smooth integration of sound, voice-over, music, pro-filmic and filmic is refused. Instead we are left with the reality of the enunciation: all footage, even archive footage, comes from somewhere and speaks a particular view.

Familial drama is central to *At the Fountainhead*, yet it too refuses to play the profoundly complicit role it has in television historical drama. The film is concerned with one generation only. The parents of that generation are referred to, but are practically absent; children are never even mentioned. This generates a sense of loss, of running down, especially as the older figures (Sophie apart) have reached a certain accommodation with their historical circumstances. Buffeted by history, they have not become or remained what we are pleased to call 'politicised individuals'. Gerhardt

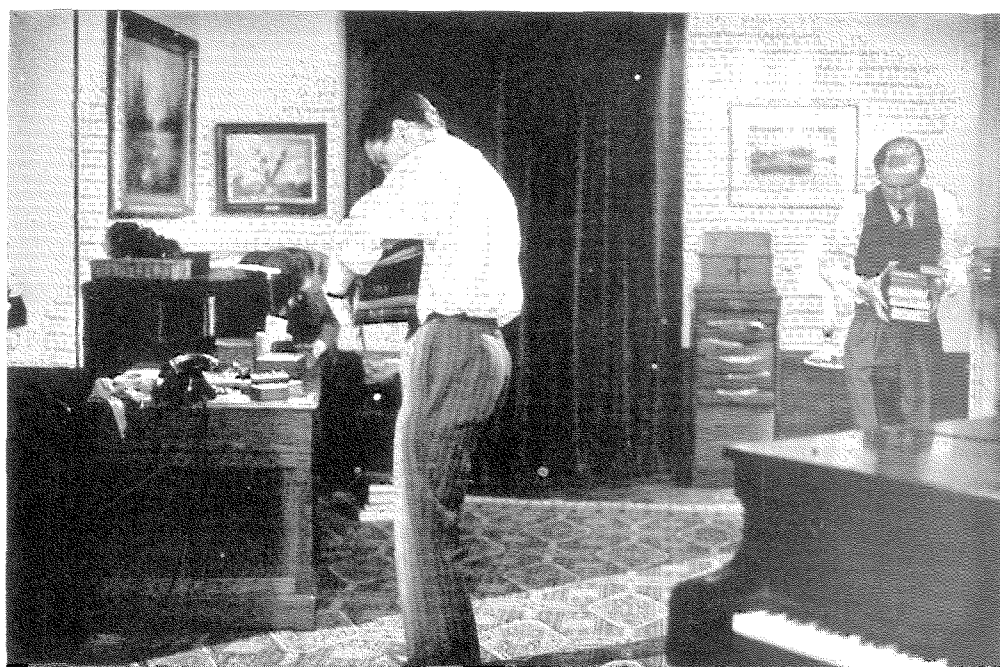


Langsdorf, living in East Berlin, is a socialist by conviction, but has been excluded from political involvement by the narrow definition of it that is current in East Germany. Gerhardt justifies his decision to remain in the East in terms of his social life rather than any wider commitment. This disillusion of aspirations is a conventional enough conception of the old in Europe. Yet it is countered to some extent by Sophie's role in promoting the book. It has lead her to becoming an active rather than passive partner in her half-brother's publishing enterprise, hitherto concerned with 'coffee-table books'. The book is a device that presents a possible struggle for (some of) the characters in the future. It is not enough of a device on its own to counter this sense of disappointment that threatens to invade parts of the film, a sense which would appear to be the inevitable result of refusing to portray history in a framework of generational progression.

Another sense which pervades the film is centrally responsible for countering this disillusion. The film is perpetually aware of its own process of enunciation, the audience always has to place what it sees and hears as being spoken or shown from somewhere. Two different overall awarenesses of the film's position of enunciation are open to viewers. The first is simply an institutional and historical awareness of the position of the film: as an independent film made in 1980. This means that the film itself is looking at events in the past, and is probably made by people who were not involved or even alive at the time some of these events occurred. There is then the powerful sense that the children are not in the film because they are behind the camera. The second awareness develops on this sense and attempts to encapsulate it into an auteurist reading of the film. It is possible to know (from the congruence of names in the titles, from reviews such as this) that the film-makers

have a close personal involvement with their material. A traditional auteurist reading is possible which overvalues the oedipal impulsion to choose such a subject, at the expense of the myriad of conflicting materials generated by this initial impulsion which are the real public interest of the film. So the film has to work a delicate balance in its approach to the device of generational continuity, so beloved of television historical dramas. It has to avoid a notion of generational progression or cycles, yet also prevent a sense of the cynicism or disillusion of old age from pervading the film. It achieves this by making clear its own status as enunciation, speaking from somewhere. Yet this could open the film to a further problem, that of being read as 'individuals talking about their family'. It avoids this by maintaining a reticence, refusing to make personal involvement clear without hiding it all together.

At the Fountainhead maintains a particular ethical position in relation to its



54 materials. This is the attitude of consistent understatement; which contrasts starkly with the hyperbole and easy melodrama of much television work in this area. Action-packed footage of the Allied advance into Germany is overlaid by a voice telling how Schmidt never saw active service, how he was disappointed at the time, but glad later: an evident disparity between voice and emotional connotations of the image. More subtle, Paul's arrest by occupying forces accused of possessing a gun would provide the dramatic high-point of any TV historic drama of the period. But here the action is treated differently, in a single shot: close in on Sophie and Paul piling their black market gains in neat heaps on the floor, panning up as mother enters, then lingering on the closed door and pulling back parallel to Sophie's movement out of frame towards a window, but facing in the opposite direction. Her shadow opening the window can be made out on the sunlit door as a vehicle is heard driving off. Such an elegant understatement (the shadow of a shadow) is typical of the film as a whole. For the viewer, each scene, each shot, each passage of music is a condensation that requires that it be deciphered. Like a dream, it is simple on the surface, but the surface immediately gives way to the intuiting of more complex and divergent meanings. Understatement, therefore, is over-determined by what it refuses (in this case the dramatic hyperbole of television historical fiction), and by what is usually obscured by what it refuses.

The effect of this regime of understatement spreads even to the staging of events themselves. We are not treated to the trope of the majestic crane shot surveying the ruins of Berlin, this is neither a time to love nor a time to die! Rather, we have an economic crane shot that serves

merely to encompass the action as a black American soldier comes to trade with Sophie and Paul. No horizons are visible, only a wall of wrecked buildings in the background, smashed masonry, a broken street sign, a jeep and three figures. We immediately suspect that this is after all only another relic of Britain's lost industrial might, temporarily invaded by a film crew during its demolition. In the kind of experience that is this 16mm film, such a suspicion is every bit as beautiful as Sirk's 'huge Cinemascope apparatus controlled by what one must call the hand of a master'. (*Godard on Godard*, London, 1972, p 139). For the fiction is present for the viewer at the same time as its disintegration. The awareness of how the shot has been constructed does not produce the breakdown of the fiction as it would in a conventional drama. It supplements it with another level of meaning, the dramatic tension of the audience having conflicting relationships to the images before them.

At *the Fountainhead* produces this particular pleasure, 'the pleasure of learning': it confronts the current regime of television history by reordering the knowledges that people have gained from this history, and by disturbing or refusing television's modes of historical exposition and reconstruction. This reordering means that some statements or episodes in the film may appear obvious to those who know them already. But the production of these facts in the film has the obviousness of a dream: taken as manifest content only, they are disappointing. Taken as text demanding decipherment, they are all-important. 'What we already know' in *At the Fountainhead* acquires new significance by its placing, modulation, in relation to current conceptions of history. The film plays history for its time, for our time. Its strategies work in relation to the

forms of historic reconstruction and exposition that confront us on television, and comprise an important facet of our fascination with history. Yet precisely because our culture's engagement with its history is one of fascination rather than discovery, *At the Fountainhead* remains a curiously opaque film for many people. It has all the opacity of a dream that demands to be analysed, but turns out to be unexpectedly resistant to analysis. Discussion of the film is a vital component in producing a deciphering of it; and to this extent it belongs very directly to the exhibition practices of independent cinema. This writing is also a contribution to this process. But as much as the film is a part of cinema, it is also profoundly for television. It demonstrates that independent cinema has a particular place in British audio-visual culture that is not defined by its use of film as a material medium. Rather, it is defined by an

attitude of questioning and exploration, producing challenge, enlightenment and pleasure. 55

'At The Fountainhead (of German Strength)'

—Credits

Written, directed and edited: Anthea Kennedy and Nicholas Burton.
 Camera: Patrick Duval.
 Production Design: Jamie Leonard.
 Costumes: Phoebe de Gaye.
 Sound: Roger Ollerhead.
 Music composed by: Benedict Mason.
 Music recording: Martin Haskell.
 Production Manager: Patsy Nightingale.
 With: Paul Geoffrey, Michael Mellinger, Val Kennedy (Schmidt/Smith/Kennedy), Brigitte Kahn (Sophie), Gerhard Richter, Andrew Wyllie (Gerhardt Langsdorf), Frederick Jaeger, William Keddell (Kurt Langsdorf).
 Produced by British Film Institute, 1980.

Photographs: Joi Leatherbarrow, Jamie Leonard



THE INDEPENDENT FILM-MAKERS' ASSOCIATION AND THE FOURTH CHANNEL

INTRODUCTION

A fourth national broadcast television channel is to begin transmission in Britain in Autumn 1982. Over the past year, the necessary legislation and basic organisation of the Fourth Channel have been produced. We publish here two related papers that have formed the basis of the Independent Film-makers' Association's campaigning and lobbying during this process.

The idea of a fourth channel has been debated for several years. The Annan Committee on the Future of Broadcasting recommended in 1977 that the new channel should be operated by an Open Broadcasting Authority, separate from both the BBC and the Independent Broadcasting Authority, and acting as a publisher rather than a producer of programmes. The eventual legislation

introduced into Parliament by a Conservative government late in 1979 is much less radical. It proposes that the new Channel should be under the control of the Independent Broadcasting Authority, and should have close ties with the existing commercial television companies which operate the present ITV franchises. Indeed, the designation originally proposed for the new channel was 'ITV 2', the title 'The Fourth Channel' being the government's sole concession to the Labour opposition during the course of the bill through parliament. The exact mechanism for the Fourth Channel is that it should be financed from the excess profits levy currently paid by ITV franchise-holders to the Treasury. This will be diverted to form an initial 'contribution' which will fund the first five years of the Channel's operation, after which its own advertising income is expected to be

enough to fund it. In return, the existing ITV companies will manage the Channel's advertising, and provide a large proportion of its programmes, thus making use of their excess studio space.

The Channel itself is to be organised as a company which does not produce any of its own material for broadcasting, but buys it from various sources. One major source will obviously be the existing ITV companies; the other is an amorphous sector known as the 'independents'. This definition covers both major multi-national operators like Lorimar (the producers of *Dallas*) or the Robert Stigwood Organisation, as well as radical innovators. News coverage will be provided by ITN (Independent Television News), which services the ITV companies. Overall, very little money will be available: if the channel is to provide about 35 hours per week when it begins transmission, it is estimated that it will have an average of £30,000 to pay for each hour of material: roughly the cost of a chat-show on the existing channels. The situation, then, is one in which the channel's options are extremely restricted, and there would appear to be little chance that any genuinely radical work could appear.

However, the debates that have taken place around the character of the new channel had at least one important effect. The legislation setting up the channel stipulates that it should encourage 'innovation and experiment in form and content'. These few words are perhaps the closest that legislation has ever come to specifying aesthetic criteria for television. They have provided the basis for the IFA's campaign to ensure that genuinely independent film and video workers will provide a significant proportion of the Fourth Channel's output. Several papers have been published stating the views of the IFA,

and these have gained wide support from 57 other groups (eg the Women's Film and Broadcasting Lobby, the Channel Four Group), from Labour, Liberal and *Plaid Cymru* parliamentarians, and from some members of the Fourth Channel Board. Of these papers, we publish two. 'Channel Four and Innovation — The Foundation' (Feb 1980) details the IFA proposal for an organisational mechanism which can provide a 'catalyst and guarantee for innovation and experiment for the Fourth Channel', a proposal that is currently under active consideration. The second is a discussion document 'British TV Today' (November 1980), which attempts to characterise current television output and the points at which innovation and experiment are both possible and highly necessary.

Major organisational decisions about the Fourth Channel are being made at considerable speed. As soon as the legislation had been passed through the Commons, the IBA appointed a 'shadow' Board for the new Fourth Channel Company*. They in turn have appointed their Chief Executive, Jeremy Isaacs, and Programme Controller, Paul Bonner. By the beginning of 1981, it is expected that the precise mechanics of the channel will have been decided, including whether it is to have a Foundation along the lines proposed by the IFA.

[JE]

*The Board of the Fourth Channel: Chair, Edmund Dell (former Labour Trade & Industry minister, now with Guinness Peat merchant bankers), Vice-Chair, Sir Richard Attenborough (film director); representatives of ITV companies Brian Tesler (London Weekend TV), David McCall (Anglia), William Brown (Scottish TV); other members, Roger Graef (documentarist), Dr Glyn Tegai-Hughes (University of Wales), Hon Mrs Sara Morrison (former chairman, Conservative Party), Anthony Smith (Director, British Film Institute), Ann Sofer (Camden Labour councillor), Joy Whitby (Children's programmes, Yorkshire TV).

THE INDEPENDENT FILM-MAKERS' ASSOCIATION BRITISH TV TODAY

1 'British TV is the best in the world' is only half true. British television is the best at a narrow range of kinds of programme making. Other countries display more diversity and experiment in their television output. British television would never give 100% financing to Angelopoulos, Antonioni or Rocha as Italy's RAI has done; we have no equivalent of the German ZDF's co-financing and broadcasting of films by such figures as Fassbinder, Herzog, Dwoskin and Woolley; we do not take chances with low-grade technology and low light levels like New York's WNET documentary experiments; we do not have a wide range of conflicting political tendencies controlling sections of broadcasting output as Italy or Holland. British television does not have the vital 'pockets of resistance', the deliberate play with aesthetic limits displayed by other national television organisations. It has a strong centripetal force. The prestige of its costume drama and documentary series tend to stifle change and experiment: everything is pulled back into behaving like them. The initial result is that there are few surprises and no shocks in current television output; the long-term result is atrophy, resting on fading laurels rather than finding fresh inspiration. We need to pinpoint the aesthetic consensus that dominates British television in order to define different approaches to programme making.

2 The aesthetic consensus within British television is dangerous because it eventually breeds a strong political consensus. Television output that looks alike also thinks alike. It is vital for the health of a democracy that its media genuinely give voice to all

the opinions that exist in that society. Both drama and current affairs represent people and opinions rather than allowing them to speak for themselves. Television processes and thus travesties many groups when it deigns to present them at all. It reduces cultural diversity rather than amplifying it. The different racial cultures that exist in Britain can scarcely use television to speak to themselves; and they are totally unable to use television to speak to the rest of the nation. Regional differences are material for comedy; it is rare to find an understanding of the problems and potentialities of the different parts of Britain. Television in a democratic society needs to be multi-accented, to present the voices of all the constituent parts of society, and of all the differing views within society. Television cannot do this if it speaks with one voice itself, and it cannot do this unless it is continually seeking the appropriate new aesthetic means that will allow those voices to speak.

Television today openly admits that it constructs a consensus 3
view from which the majority of programmes, drama and news alike, construct the world. John Pilger's series of documentaries were prefaced by the statement that they represented the view of one individual only. What if 'News at Ten' were preceded by the announcement 'This programme represents only the opinion of those who prepared it'? This would produce a shock. But the work of producing the two programmes is not fundamentally different, and neither is their form. News broadcasts present a single view of reality, of what is important in the world and how it is constructed. On the surface, television output has a great variety. Beneath the surface there is far less variety: the construction of a consensus view of the world produces a sense of monotony. Such a monotony is dangerous because it prevents the appearance of a conflict of views. If this conflict is to appear on television, then both the aesthetics and the production procedures of television will have to be changed.

Current British television is dominated by the assumption that its 4
audience gives it a particular level of attention. It therefore provides a steady flow of information, of gags, of images. Anything that departs from the speed of this flow is condemned with the claim that the audience would never understand it. There is never too much information to absorb, and never too little. Programmes are designed to explicate, not to 'confuse'; that is, to limit the range of doubt and questions that are possible for the audience.

Programmes are presented as though they are content transferred through or from the broadcasters to the audience by way of a neutral medium, the television programme. But television is not neutral, as most people working within it know. It is full of routines, of correct ways of doing things, of permissible directions for innovation. For the audience, these routines are not as visible as they appear to the programme-makers. The formats seem to behave as the neutral containers for the message. This is because television always assumes the same state of receptiveness in the viewer. Television invites the audience to conform to its mode of attention. This mode of attention, combined with the consensus view of the world, construct the audience for the mass medium in its own image: it becomes a mass audience.

- 5 Can a mass audience conception of television viewers sustain *four* national television channels? One problem with current television is that the mass audience conception still dominates, despite the creation of a third, 'minority' channel for the BBC. BBC 2 maintains exactly the same conception of audience attention that the other two channels have. It merely 'spends' it on material that appeals to smaller groups within that audience: snooker instead of football.

BBC2 constructs its audience as though they had exactly the same expectation of the medium as the viewers for the other channels: it's just that their tastes, or their ethnic culture makes them a 'minority' within the mass audience. It sometimes seems that the only minority not catered for is those who, occasionally or consistently, declare themselves to be bored with television or to hate it. This sense of occasional dissatisfaction is much wider than any group of aesthetes based in London, wider than the audience who regularly attend cinema in search for something 'innovatory in form and content'. It is a sign that the mass audience is a construction of the medium, which assumes a fairly consistent level of attention from its viewers. The effort of holding attention to that level all the time is cloying for many viewers. The fourth channel offers the chance to break away from this mass conception of the level of audience attention. To achieve this, the practical limits of current television have to be identified and challenged. Television's physical limits, its dominant trends in particular programme forms, what falls between or outside those programme forms: these are what are at stake.

Current television has certain quasi-physical limitations which are closely related to the maintenance of a standard form of attention. Silence is an abomination: more than a short moment of absolute silence and the search begins for a presumed fault in transmission. A certain image quality is strenuously maintained (against pressure from lower-grade American tape imports like *Soap*). The aim is an immediately and completely decipherable image: no puzzles, no image that refuses to resolve itself into an object, no ambiguity, not even a play with contrast and colour balance except in *Top of the Pops*. Such limitations are the point at which the basic assumptions of the kind of material permissible on television become the technical common-sense of the medium. Even this common-sense level needs to be experimented with. 6

Closely linked with these quasi-physical limits is the basic pattern of almost all television material. There is a certain balance that is maintained between images or sounds in a particular programme. An image is held on screen for the duration of its 'information value'. Once it has been exhausted as content, it is exhausted as image. It is not held so that the audience is able to look at it again; it is not taken away so quickly that it is impossible to decipher it. This goes further; in any programme there is quickly established a rhythm of editing in which the audience is presented with a certain proportion of images (and sounds) that are familiar to them from earlier in the programme, and a certain proportion that are new. This balance between the new and the familiar is most evident in a simple interview: there is an alternation between a couple of basic set-ups, an occasional cut to the audience, an occasional shot of the interviewer or interviewee listening while the other speaks. Even a brief news bulletin interview shot with one camera takes additional material of the interviewer 'listening'. This is cut in to provide an alternation between new and already familiar images (and, conveniently, material to smooth over any elision). It is very exceptional to find any disturbance to this balance between the novel and the familiar. 7

Television has a conventionalised method of programme production. Television proposes us 'broadcasters' who are professional, standing between the 'public' on the one hand, and television's 'subjects' on the other. Broadcasters are separate from 8

both these other categories. They are not 'members of the public' who are addressed by the medium, neither are they the subjects of the medium. This strange role is defended because it allows a certain freedom of movement for broadcasters. But being an artificial separation (broadcasters are themselves citizens and should be scrutinised by the medium they turn upon others), it can be restricting for both broadcasters and for the society that consumes their products. This has been realised for some time, but the solution offered merely reverses the relationship between broadcasters and their subjects, and hence is no real solution. If broadcasting is cut off from the public, they say, then let the public do a bit of broadcasting. Hence, access programmes: programmes with no rationale for their existence (in terms of schedules) apart from the fact that they are 'access'.

- 9 'Access' is an unsatisfactory solution to the problem of the separation of broadcasters and their subjects. It constrains those who gain 'access' to putting an argument because, as they are reminded, this will be their only opportunity to do so. Yet television is constantly representing people, groups, opinions, ways of living, across all of its output. The voices of many interests and sectors of society are often represented (often travestied), but those who are represented have no means of controlling how they are represented. There is an urgent need to develop practices through which those who are or can be represented on television can participate in and control their portrayal, in drama just as much as in current affairs, in comedy just as much as news. There are several models of programme production available which break down the separation between programme makers and those represented on television without denying the need for experienced programme makers. The first is that of the film collective, whose democratic methods of working allow the integration of skills and knowledges from the 'subjects' of the programmes, rather than the isolating progress of the researcher gathering and preparing material for the programme-makers. The second is that of programme-makers who are themselves involved with and committed to particular (political or pressure group) movements, to particular social situations, communities, theatre groups, music performers, etc. This second involvement yields programmes at a different pace to the work of professionals 'choosing' a subject, but it yields different programmes too, as well as effectively enfranchising the subjects of the programme. Our proposal for a Foundation administering a special fund devoted to innovation

and experiment for the Fourth Channel provides a mechanism through which groups could be brought into contact with such programme makers. Channel Four without such a mechanism would deal exclusively with existing production companies. Groups who have rich experiences in all kinds of activity, but none in programme production, would have no route of access to making programmes from their experiences. One aspect of the Foundation's work would be to seek out such groups and to provide them with appropriate forms of assistance. Such forms of programme origination and production would ensure immediately that the subjects of programmes would no longer be objects to be portrayed. In the long term, they would ensure that the amorphous 'public' which broadcasting claims to address would be broken up into differing groups using all the technical and aesthetic means available to speak to each other.

Television scheduling presupposes that programmes fit certain 10 genre definitions: news, drama, comedy, sport, etc. These definitions are dangerous in that the genres tend to develop an internal dynamic of their own, and lose touch with each other. Significantly, the largest single aesthetic controversy of recent times in television has been that around the deliberate 'crossing' of two genres: documentary and drama. This crossing has been controversial because it has tended to reveal just how little separates the two. This has challenged documentary's claim to be concerned with facts because it has demonstrated it as a particular set of conventions of programme construction. The generic mixing of documentary and drama has shown that the 'factness' of facts is a product of the programme format: anything stated in a documentary form, supported by contextualising material, *becomes* a fact. 'Docu-drama' has disturbed an artificial distinction between genres which is politically necessary for current television. Genres are convenient alike for scheduling and for begging difficult questions about the political stance of programmes. They must come under continual scrutiny and disturbance in the output of the Fourth Channel. Their presuppositions must be constantly pointed out and displaced: such is the process of 'innovation'.

What are the presuppositions of some major television genres?

S P O R T : sports coverage emphasises the product, the outcome, 11 at the expense of the event itself. There has long been a criticism of the 'goal pornography' of football coverage. Further, coverage

neglects the process of training and preparation that is necessary to any sports event, making athletes appear to be naturally brilliant. And since sport is more and more geared towards its television coverage, this means that training will continue to be neglected, not just in the popular imagination, but in the practice of funding as well. Television sports coverage also emphasises competition in events over their sense of beauty, achievement and collective endeavour. Missing is the sense that it takes more than the winner to make a race. Sports coverage is chauvinist: it gives ludicrous emphasis to nationality, and favouritism to any speck of 'British' involvement; it harps on sexual difference, on the presumed masculinity of men and femininity of women, which inevitably produces a patronising attitude to women. Current coverage isolates sport from life, even to the extent of ignoring the spectators present at an event, unless, of course, they create a 'newsworthy' disturbance.

- 12 TELEVISION DRAMA is dominated by theatrical and literary models. It is constructed like a conventional play, with a series of acts each of which marks a progression on the previous one. The dominant mode is that of naturalism. Drama is limited to portraying contemporary and historical figures as we expect them to be. There is no attempt to break out of this circle of expectations, to present what is or was, but should not be, according to our preconceptions. Thus we have no equivalent of Rossellini's historical reconstructions for RAI; we only have very rare and precarious attempts to break out of the naturalistic, literary/theatric mode.
- 13 NEWS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS: News bulletins are dominated by the newspaper conception of a newsworthy event. The world is assumed to exist out there in a steady state which is occasionally disrupted by violent actions which can usually (though not always) be explained. News is crisis-based, dominated by an outrageous notion of 'conflict', and consists of a string of isolated events. Current affairs programmes are issue-based, taking one problem or situation at a time. They avoid considerations of more general perspectives, of different views of how society works, of different possible and existing societies. Current affairs is sometimes presented as 'filling in the gaps' between and behind news bulletins. But this artificial separation misleads a public who do not chase current affairs and news bulletins around the medium to gain a sense of 'background'. The Fourth Channel's news coverage should not ape the conventional division between bulletin and background that we have developed in Britain and the USA.

ADVERTISEMENTS: Advertisements are often formally inventive, sometimes seizing upon the latest developments in television genres in order to lampoon them. However, this interesting formal function of ads is far outweighed by their relentless insistence on particular social stereotypes. Television ad-land is totally white and middle class, populated entirely by cosy nuclear families. Sex-roles are entirely conventionalised: it is as impossible to see a woman mending her own car as it is a man cooking for a group of people. If the Fourth Channel's commitment to innovation is to be real, then it will have to find ways of altering the social emphasis of advertisements. Otherwise, the conceptions of the advertising market will tend to have an effect on the social emphases of programmes.

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CHILDREN: Children's programmes are the culmination of television's habitual separation of broadcasters from both their subjects and their public. Children are spoken to in children's programmes, they never speak for themselves, present their own ideas. The result is that children's programmes conform to a middle class adult's conception of children; and adults can find nothing of interest or instruction in children's programmes. Children's curiosity about the medium they are watching is never satisfied. Children's programmes need to involve children in their construction by exploring their conceptions of and use of the medium, what they expect and want from it.

15

Television in Britain hardly ever reflects upon itself. The terms of debate about television are woefully inadequate as a result. Most television just goes out, never to be seen again. Most television is never commented upon publicly: when it is, it serves as the butt for the wit of a Clive James or a Nancy Banks-Smith. The little reflection that television devotes to itself is almost entirely producer-based rather than audience-based. The questions that are debated are those of the ethics of particular practices in relation to their subjects, or of the problems of particular genres and their creators. What is startlingly absent is any debate about the use of television by its audiences, of notions of flow, of the political results of consensus broadcasting. Hence the multiple misunderstandings by media practitioners of *Bad News* and *More Bad News*. These books looked at the product on the screen, for an audience; practitioners thought they were looking at the process of production of that product. An analysis of programmes was taken as an analysis of news-gathering alone. The Fourth Channel

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needs to open its own output to continual scrutiny, and to scrutinise the products of the other channels. Studio discussions are not the only format in which this can be done: one major area of programme making must be the examination of television, its practices and its products, its history (nowadays instantly unknown) and its future.

- 17 It is an indictment of the closed nature of British television that it has no sustained tradition of innovation and experiment in form and content that it can draw on for the Fourth Channel. The work has gone on elsewhere: amongst film-makers who have rejected the whole apparatus of television to work in a medium that, underfinanced though it is, still provides many more opportunities; amongst video artists who have turned their backs to the whole concept of broadcasting, or have worked with community-based cable experiments. The Fourth Channel must provide the means both to enfranchise these disenfranchised programme-makers, and to give voice to those who have until now been confined to silence by broadcast television consensus attitudes.

November 1980

camera obscura

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THE INDEPENDENT FILM-MAKERS' ⁶⁷ ASSOCIATION CHANNEL FOUR AND INNOVATION

If TV 4 is to be different in any meaningful way, if it is really to make possible and encourage in practice the innovative and experimental spirit to which it is so easy simply to pay lip service, then there must be more than rhetoric and good intentions. . . . The need now is for safeguards which will counter-weight the power and pressure of the market and the ITCA⁽¹⁾ companies and will permit social and cultural rather than commercial criteria to maintain their proper place in decisions on scheduling, programme-making and purchasing. . . . It remains necessary to broaden access to television, to reduce bureaucratic, governmental and monopoly power in television, to release creative energies within television and to approach programme-making with new conviction. The content of broadcasting is going to change anyway (video-disc, VTR, Euro-satellite, etc) and with it the foundation on which current conventional wisdom is based. It would be fatal if TV 4 became locked into the consensus attitudes and routine habits of the existing channels.

There is already a strong lobby arguing that TV 4 must foster economic independence by commissioning and purchasing programmes outside the ITV companies and their subsidiaries. There is a lobby arguing for political independence in the sense that TV 4 must encourage investigative and controversial TV journalism and drama, must redress the bias of current consensus broadcasting and must broaden access to -airtime. These lobbies should be strongly supported. There must also be a third lobby for cultural independence to support programmes which go beyond the usually accepted limits of the medium. This is not a luxury or a tithe to conscience. It is necessary to guarantee a measure of true independence for a Fourth Channel committed to diversity, difference and innovation.

Extracts from the IFA's pamphlet, *Channel 4 and Independence*, August 1979.

INTRODUCTION

- 1 In 'Channel Four and Independence' the IFA proposed specifically that: 'The IBA should set aside a proportion of [the Channel's] revenue for a Foundation charged with providing programmes of cultural and social value'. This proposal was put to the IBA formally by our Association and personally by those IFA members who attended the IBA's 'consultation' with independent producers. However, the IBA's statement of intent about the Fourth Channel completely ignores the question of innovation and experiment. Our Association considers it to be a deplorable interpretation of the Home Secretary's Cambridge speech^[2]. It does not raise the question of innovative work, and makes none of the appropriate arrangements for its production and transmission. This significant omission has been raised in subsequent discussions with the Authority and its staff. They have acknowledged that the new Channel will 'of course' have particular regard for new approaches to programme-making and scheduling. The silence about how this can come about is deafening.

- 2 In the light of the IBA's silence, we particularly welcome the fact that the text of the Broadcasting Bill makes explicit the Fourth Channel's production. In the words of the Bill, the new Channel must 'encourage innovation and experiment in the form and content of programmes'. This is something that we have consistently campaigned for. For this noble statement of intent to become reality, however, the IBA's guidelines must instruct the Fourth Channel to institute special arrangements for innovative and experimental work. These must ensure that immediate support is given to programmes from that area of independent production that is demonstrably the most promising source of new practices and perspectives. These special arrangements would have two aims. First, they would make concrete the Channel's commitment to diverse programmes and new sources of programme-making. Further, they would provide means of supporting innovation and experiment in both production and scheduling practices. The IBA's response to the Bill's clear instruction to encourage innovation and experiment will be an early indication of the IBA's vision, or lack of it, of the new Channel it is to regulate.

The inevitable pressures of rating, consensus wisdom and scarce finance make inevitable the need for special arrangements to stimulate audio-visual 'research and development'. Without special measures, innovatory work for the Fourth Channel will be still-born. As it will not fit conventional production patterns, its financial needs will be neglected. As it will not service a definable 'minority interest', it will be squeezed out of schedules. As it will be controversial, it will tend to be avoided for safer pursuits. The special arrangements necessary to avoid such a state of affairs is the main subject for our paper. 3

FINANCE

It has been suggested in some quarters that it would be enough simply to establish a special budget to be used at the Channel Controller's discretion. The need for special financial arrangements is obvious. But there is a temptation which must be minimised: that of fixing funding on a tentative *ad hoc* basis, and so excluding long-term factors from consideration. A coherent plan and long-term view are essential if the available finance is to be used effectively. Therefore, a special budget must be fixed on a tri-annual basis at the very least. 4

The level of the annual allocation is also obviously fundamental. A token, derisory budget would be likely to produce a token, derisory result, and this would serve no interest. If the Channel's commitment is to be made concrete, the finance must be adequate and significant. What some might consider the opposite risk, that too much will be made available to support experiment and innovation, seems to us to be exceedingly slight. Timidity rather than extravagance is the real danger here. In our view the most straightforward and satisfactory method of determining the annual budget demands reserving a fixed percentage of the Channel's overall annual budget to this purpose. On this basis, we consider ten per cent to be an adequate minimum starting point, since it is neither an insignificant nor an unreasonable percentage in relation to the new Channel's defined aims and predicted resources. 5

THE FOUNDATION

Assured and adequate finance is one essential; a definite and coherent policy to support new work and working methods is the other. Our Association proposes the idea of a Foundation to resolve 6

the difficult problem of policy definition and implementation. The Fourth Channel's commitment to innovation and experiment means that it will be entering waters that British television has never chosen to explore. It has to foster diverse and unpredictable initiatives. These would sit uneasily with the many other duties of the Controller, were he or she to have total discretion over the special budget.

- 7 The Controller is currently characterised as a benevolent despot, able to give a sympathetic ear in plush surroundings to all who wish to be heard. Even if such a wise and extraordinary being were to be found, his or her overall responsibility for the operation of the Channel would mean that little or no time would be left to be devoted to the development of meaningful programmes of innovative work. More likely, the formal responsibility for this area would be delegated to others. Decisions about policy, individual applications and financial allocations would therefore be buried in the standard television bureaucratic hierarchy. This has not proved in the past to be fertile ground for new ideas. We want a structure for decision making which is also innovatory and experimental and which is not dependent either on the whims of Controllers or the ingrained prejudices of the medium's mandarin.
- 8 Our proposal for a Foundation provides a method and a structure for decision-making which is more 'open', accessible and democratic than existing methods and structures in British television. It is also more appropriate to innovative and experimental production in that it creates a distinct and different decision making process. It is our firm conviction that policy and decision making for this area of production must be, and must be seen to be, located outside the established hierarchy of television. If it is not, lifeless and predictable uniformity, not challenging and surprising diversity, will be produced. Standard attitudes emanating from standard structures will not give non-standard results. The need for special organisational arrangements designed to create the institutional conditions within which imaginative and diverse approaches to programme making can flourish has been in recent years increasingly recognised abroad, but not yet in Britain. ZDF in The Federal Republic of Germany, INA in France, and WNET's Laboratory in New York are but the best known examples.
- 9 We propose a Foundation with its own legal identity and defined

area of competence. The heart of our case is that such an entity is vital for the success of the Fourth Channel's commitment to innovation and experiment. There are additional reasons for our proposal. If the Foundation were to take form of an educational or cultural charity or trust, there may be fiscal and financial advantages. Although the relationship between the Foundation and Channel Four will obviously be a special one, the Foundation could attract finance from other sources to support innovation and experiment, and could thus provide a channel for sponsorship which filters out its unacceptable aspects. The Foundation might also provide an adequately defined context within which unconventional modes of production can be accommodated and encouraged in a manner which would not threaten the basis of existing industrial agreements.

Two main objections to the idea of a Foundation can be seen from the point of view of the standard patterns and conceptions of British television. First, it will be argued that the Foundation would establish a new level of decision making that will not fit comfortably into the Channel's centralised command structure. Since, as has already been explained, this is inevitably an essential objective of our proposal, we cannot accept the validity of this objection. Second, it is bound to be suggested that a Foundation would increase the cost of administering the special budget. We hope that the Foundation will provide a concrete safeguard against merely token support for innovation. Administering a fund for innovation and experiment through such a Foundation need cost no more than administering it through the Channel's executives. These costs may well be easier to hide within the Channel's general administrative budget, but that is a different matter. We unhesitatingly accept the need to keep administrative costs to a minimum so that the maximum of available resources can be invested in production, and there is a case for saying that it would be easier to control these expenses within the Foundation structure. Assuming the Channel's level of commitment to the support of innovation is constant, the real cost of administration is a function of the level of that commitment and not of the institutional framework within which it operates. We do, nonetheless, see the need for strict limits to be placed on the Foundation's administrative costs so that its role as a channel for funds does not, as a result of the inevitable institutional and bureaucratic pressures for expansion and aggrandisement, become distorted or diverted.

THE FOUNDATION'S GOVERNING COUNCIL

- 11 Within the Foundation's specific area of competence, the Council would determine policy, appoint permanent staff, and make major funding decisions. It should meet regularly, and, subject to the normal exceptions for confidential items, its meetings and minutes should be open to public scrutiny. The frequency of Council meetings will in large part depend on how it chooses to handle its business. There is an obvious need for frequent meetings at the outset, but after that an annual maximum of ten day-long meetings a year is likely to be sufficient. We favour the reimbursement of Council members' expenses when on Foundation business and some system of making up lost earnings that might result from Council work.
- 12 The membership of the Council should balance the somewhat conflicting needs for a variety of viewpoints to be able to find expression and for a compact, efficient and committed Council. A Council of about a dozen members would, in our view, be satisfactory. Membership should rotate so that in the third and all subsequent years one third of the members should resign. Consideration will need to be given to imposing a limit on the number of terms that a single individual can serve. The Council's Chairperson should be elected by the Council itself.
- 13 The method of selecting the Council's members is a key question. We propose a mixture of election and appointment, not because we consider this to be ideal in principle but because we feel that it is a reasonable compromise in these particular circumstances. It is crucial that all those committed to the Foundation and its objectives have confidence in its procedures. To achieve this, an elected section of the Council is essential for the film and video makers, present and future, working within the Foundation's cultural and innovative perspectives. Equally, it is to be expected that the IBA and the Board of the Fourth Channel will consider it essential that the Channel has some say in the selection of Council members. Even though those elected by the film and video makers and those appointed by the Channel's Board would sit on the Council in an individual rather than representative capacity and we are suggesting no requirement that those elected must necessarily be film makers or that those appointed must necessarily be directly connected with the Channel, it would be naive to assume that the views, attitudes and interests of those making

the selection would not, in general, be echoed by those they selected. To remove the possibility of a permanently divided Council, we propose that one third of the Council be elected, on a regional basis, by members of our Association, one third appointed by the Board of the Fourth Channel, and the final third be chosen from or by established cultural bodies, such as the Arts Council of Great Britain, the British Film Institute, the Standing Conference of Regional Arts Association's Committee of Film and Video Officers, and the TUC's Arts Committee.

As we have already made clear, we have no desire to establish yet another vast media machine to administer the Foundation's day to day operations. Accommodation and a minimum number of staff are, however, evident necessities. The Foundation's premises should not, in our view, be located within the offices of the new Channel. A separate office gives visible and practical effect to the Foundation's legal autonomy and specific character. There is also a need for at least one Foundation office outside London so that direct, personal contact with the Foundation and its staff is not the exclusive prerogative of those who live in the South East or those who can afford the cost of frequent visits to the distant capital. The Foundation's staff would have three major responsibilities. They would act as the secretariat and executive of the Council. They would administer and monitor the Foundation's support programmes. Finally, they would handle liaison with the Channel's Programme Directorate in collaboration with the Chairperson. 14

THE SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

A uniform funding pattern is clearly inappropriate both to the diverse production practices, which it is the role of the Foundation to foster, and to the demands imposed by television itself. For this reason, we take the view that the Foundation must create a number of funding mechanisms, each with its own defined rationale and objectives. We foresee the need for at least four distinct support mechanisms. These will undoubtedly evolve with the passage of time, but their existence from the start will restrict the likelihood that the Foundation's funding pattern is either inflexible or monolithic. The four specific areas of support for which there is immediate need are: Production Units, Project Funding, Production Facility Centres, and Development Support. 15

PRODUCTION UNITS

- 16 The existing, monolithic pattern of supporting film and video work is project-based. That is, funding is provided to produce a single project and normally on the basis of a detailed shooting script. This pattern of support is not inherently unsatisfactory, but it becomes so when it is the only one. Project-based support precludes continuous production activity and its coherent development. Our proposal for a specific programme to support Production Units grew out of an analysis of the inadequacies of an exclusively project-based approach to funding.
- 17 Permanent Production Units, including between six and a dozen members, would be funded on a tri-annual basis so that continuity of production can be maintained. The selection procedure would be broadly similar to that used by the IBA in awarding the ITV franchises. The Council would assess applications in light of the Foundation's role and policy, and make its selections on the basis of the applicant's plans for production, budget, objectives and structure as well as the background and experience of the members of the applicant Unit. At least half the Production Units should be based outside the South East to ensure that the inevitable bias in favour of London-based independent producers is counter-balanced. Once selected the Units' operating and production costs over the three year period would be provided by the Foundation. Consideration of specific projects and the decisions on them will be made by the members of the Units themselves. We expect that it would be possible for twenty such Production Units to be operational within two years of the Foundation's official inception. Approximately 50% of the Foundation's annual production budget should be devoted to this support programme.

THE PROJECT FUND

- 18 About 25% of the annual allocation should be devoted to supporting projects chosen by the Council in the traditional project-based manner. Within the context of the Foundation's special relationship with the Fourth Television Channel, the notion of a project, which may be a series in television's terms, becomes more flexible than is the case at present when a project is normally a single film or tape. We do not wish, however, to see a high percentage of the Project Fund being spent on a very small number of projects. First and second time applicants should be given preferential consideration. We would also hope that established programme makers as well as the new ones will make use of the

opportunity afforded by this Fund when they wish to undertake projects which fall within the Foundation's specific competence.

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PRODUCTION FACILITY CENTRES

This programme is designed to increase and improve both the technical facilities that are available to innovative independent production and the access by non-professionals to the means of audio-visual production. These Centres would provide a service of production skills and facilities, mainly production and post-production equipment, of a modest and acceptable standard. Within the national network of Centres, a few would specialise in the provision of more sophisticated services for which the demand is adequate within the system. Animation and electronic special effects are possible examples. Providing both public access points and facility services, and Centres would further develop the links between local communities and minorities and independent film and video makers committed to working for and with the disenfranchised voices in this country. The Foundation's role in this area, as in others, should be to make such things possible, not to impose or implant them. These Centres will stand empty and be useless if they are set up without local roots, skills and support. A very rudimentary and impoverished network of this kind already exists, and we would expect the development of successful existing film and video centres to be the first priority. Initially, the Production Facility Centre Fund should give priority to capital investment, primarily in equipment, and particular attention will have to be paid to increasing the number and technical capabilities of video production facilities. Once an adequate national infrastructure is operational, revenue funding to cover operating costs and salaries would increase proportionally within the support programme. The remaining 25% of the Foundation's annual budget would be for these Centres.

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DEVELOPMENT FUND

The importance of 'seed money' for project research and development has been emphasised by the whole range of independent producers, and it is of the greatest importance to those who will be hoping to work with the support of the Foundation. The ever present danger that the Foundation's support programmes might be looked upon as permits to print cigar money by groups or individuals with predominantly commercial, rather than social and cultural, interest in experimental and innovative production is nowhere more evident. Without a Development Fund to cover

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the expenses of proper research and presentation for applications, especially in the case of major projects, only established individuals and companies that can afford a 'flutter' will be in a position to submit properly prepared, presented and budgeted applications for consideration by the Council. A Development Fund, with procedures and perspectives that are flexible and appropriate, is, therefore, essential if the most independent independents and the least influential and affluent are not to be placed at an automatic disadvantage in the very first stage of the assessment process.

TRAINING

- 21 The opportunities for practical training offered by the British film and television industries are extremely limited. To the extent that they do exist, they are institutionalised and enclosed in the narrowest of professional and ideological conceptions. We see the Foundation having an important role to play in the provision of practical training in a different mould but with a coherent basis. Short-term traineeships could and should be available to Production Units and Facility Centres throughout the country. This training programme would be open to recent graduates of film schools as well as those with no previous formal training in film or television production. The demand that the Fourth Channel must make special provision for the training of women and silenced minorities has been made by a wide variety of organisations, including our own. This priority must also obviously be built into the Foundation's training programme. Appointments procedure, training programme, and assessment would be the joint responsibility of the Foundation and the Unit or Centre sponsoring the traineeship.

DISCRIMINATION

- 22 The Foundation must seek to raise the impenetrable barrier that divides producers and viewers and to counteract the media planners' manipulatory categorisation of viewers into age, class, race and gender. It can do this by broadening recruitment and access so that disenfranchised voices can become more involved in production. Britain's diverse racial cultures have pitifully few programmes addressed to them, and are totally unable to use television to communicate their distinctive ways of living to the television audience. The question of the stereotyped representation of women on television is also relevant here as it cuts across all existing programme types — drama, current affairs, documentary, children's programmes, 'arts', education, etc. Our con-

cern is not only with documentary representations of women, but also with the extraordinary power of fictional representations to shape and mould the assumptions of both men and women about the position of women in society. This stereotype is perpetuated by the fact that only a very small proportion of women work in film and television industries in either technical or decision-making grades, a situation which has been noted and documented by the Annan Committee and in the ACTT's report, *Patterns of Discrimination*. Across the whole range of existing programmes women are under-represented both as production personnel and at the level of content. We, therefore, expect the Foundation to take concrete steps to achieve a broad numerical equality between men and women in traineeships, production support programmes and its own staff appointments and to support experimental and innovative projects that attack, interrogate, and transform the established media view of women. We also expect those bodies that are empowered to appoint Council members to bear in mind the principle of equal representation when making their appointments. As regards the elected members, a requirement for equal representation will apply in accordance with the existing practice of our Association.

COPYRIGHT, CONTRACTS AND PROFITS

We expect that broadly similar contractual terms to those envisaged by independent producers generally in relation to the new Channel will apply to arrangements between film-makers and the Foundation. The Channel will have rights to a fixed number of transmissions of Foundation-funded work without further repayment. All other rights must be held by the maker or makers. In the case when the Channel does not choose to exercise its option, however, the makers should be free to dispose of the British television rights as they see fit. Any revenue that results from the sale or licensing of other rights would be shared between the Foundation and the makers. In order to safeguard the Foundation's social and cultural duty 'to encourage innovation and experiment in both the form and the content of programmes' from either being exploited for gain by private interests or being seen as a competitor in the struggle for profits by private sector producers, it is essential to define the economic context of the Foundation's support in a way which protects and strengthens its social and cultural objectives. To ensure this, all revenue from production must not only be shared between the Foundation and the makers, but it must also be used only for reinvestment in pro-

duction or production facilities. Income from production would, thus remain within the system and be used for expanding and developing the realm of innovation and experiment.

SCHEDULING

- 24 To place the transmission of programmes funded by the Foundation within a 'ghetto slot', thus isolating and sanctifying Innovation in a manner akin to that of Religious Programmes, presents a number of clear advantages for those who will have the task of demonstrating in the annual report that the Channel has fulfilled its statutory obligation to encourage innovation. With such a 'ghetto slot', determining the percentage of Innovation would be simple. It would be necessary only to multiply the weekly programme slot length by 52 and dividing that result into the total hours transmitted. The statistical rendering of Innovation could thus appear in print alongside of the percentages of hours devoted to serious, light, adult, family, educational, religious, drama, documentary, etc, and the statutory obligation would have been seen to have been satisfied. Innovation and experiment are, fortunately, not that simple, but there is no doubt that they can be disposed of that simply.
- 25 To place experiment in a categorical straightjacket and to lock it up within the sterile patterns of national television scheduling techniques, then, makes no sense, for it will do nothing to encourage new approaches to programme making in all existing categories as well as in those not yet defined. The diversity of Foundation funded production will not fit easily into the constraints of standard schedules. Experiment in scheduling is an essential corollary of experiment in production. New strategies for scheduling will be required. What these are and how they are to be implemented must be the subjects of constant discussion among the film and video makers, the Foundation and the Channel. One major factor must, nonetheless, be considered at this stage, the relationship between production and transmission of Foundation funded programmes. For a wide variety of reasons, but mainly to ensure that the Foundation's Council has a significant degree of editorial autonomy when deciding upon applications, we do not favour compulsory transmission by the Fourth Channel of all productions funded by or through the Foundation. We do, however, foresee the need to establish the general principle of transmission by means of a minimum quota for Foundation funded

projects. We consider a 75% minimum would be both adequate and sufficiently flexible during the Foundation's first few years of operation.

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CONCLUSION

The statutory duty that the Broadcasting Bill proposes should be laid upon the IBA 'to encourage innovation and experiment' applies to the new Channel's total output of programmes and not just those funded by the proposed Foundation, and, just as we have no wish to see work funded by the Foundation tucked away in a distant and dusty corner of the schedules, we have no desire to see innovation and experiment on the Channel become the privileged and exclusive domain of the Foundation. Our proposed Foundation is intended to provide a catalyst and guarantee for innovation and experiment for the Fourth Channel, not another layer of stifling bureaucracy.

February 1980

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PAUL KERR

RE-INVENTING THE CINEMA

Why watch old films? Why concern ourselves with film history? These are serious questions for SEFT at a time of shrinking resources and arguably more immediate priorities. One of the most familiar responses to early cinema is André Bazin's aphorism: 'The origins of an art reveal something of its nature'. Bazin's essentialism aside, attention to the cinema's origins can denaturalise its presently dominant modes and reveal their historically specific determinants as well as the availability of alternatives to them. This was the aim of South West Arts' recent weekend school, 'Inventing The Cinema', which screened some sixty 'primitive' (ie pre-1906) films, staged a magic lantern show and an exhibition of turn-of-the-century film technology and contextualised them with papers and presentations on such aspects of early cinema as point-of-view, political economy, class content, and images of imperialism. It also brought out lessons that can be — and to some extent already have been — learned from it by avant-garde film-makers by theoreticians and finally by film historians themselves.

The weekend was organised as a sort of

sequel to and an opportunity for second thoughts about the FIAF conference held in Brighton in May 1978 at which some fifteen hundred films from the 1900-1906 period were screened. (For a general overview of the primitive cinema of this period see Barry Salt's summary, 'Film Form 1900-1906', in *Sight and Sound*, Summer 1978; for a specific reassessment of Edwin S Porter's contribution to that cinema, see Noël Burch's 'Porter, or Ambivalence', *Screen*, Winter 1978/9). In the pages of *Screen* both Burch and, more recently, Mick Eaton ('Taste Of The Past — Cinema History on Television', *Screen* vol 21 no 1) have described the all-too-familiar formulae of orthodox film history with its litanies of 'firsts' and 'greats', its linearity of 'causes' and 'effects' and its elevation of one specific system to the status of 'Esperanto for the eyes' as an allegedly 'natural', 'universal' film language. Rather than repeat Burch and Eaton's critiques of such history I concentrate on arguments more specific to the school, concerning the constraints, conditions and conventions of primitive cinema.

A number of very different cases were

made and a variety of positions were taken which only a busy schedule prevented from further elaboration. Michael Chanan, for instance, (author of *The Dream That Kicks*, (Routledge, London 1980) a new booklength study of the birth of British cinema) argued for an increased attention to the modes of production (eg individual or collective, amateur or professional, industrial or artisanal) and of consumption (eg the size and setting of halls, the class position of the audience and the presence or absence of pianists, lecturers, lights etc — to which one might add the frequency of faulty projection). Implicit in Chanan's case, in fact, was a sustained polemic against what he called 'the *Cahiers* line' on the allegedly inherent ideological implications of the basic cinematic apparatus. For Chanan, cinema is less an ideological apparatus than an apparatus in an ideological context: he sees early British cinema as a neutral apparatus at the disposal of an imperialist power. Chanan also pointed out the long pedigree of 'dramatised documentary' — as early as 1902 Pathé admitted that not all its newsreels could be authenticated — and he emphasised that it was the *pleinair*/documentary mode which dominated film production until about 1904 when the fiction film finally overtook it. Rather more controversially, Chanan argued that central to the imperialism of early cinema (both in terms of its imagery and its industry) was the category of 'the exotic' which he defined as decontextualised fragments from the periphery transported to and exhibited in the metropolis. Although he was referring here to the 'celluloid tourism' (in Burch's words) perpetrated by white middle class filmmakers on non-white racial, regional, ethnic, peasant and proletarian cultures, his argument was in some ways analogous

to Laura Mulvey's analysis of 'the erotic' 81 in which she characterised the construction of femininity in patriarchal narrative cinema as similarly 'stylised and fragmented'. This analogy, however, remains to be investigated.

If Chanan's emphasis was on the materiality of the production (and projection) process, Ben Brewster's account of the development of the conditions for and conventions of point-of-view paid particular attention to the demographics of early audiences (in pre-1907 America, for instance, Burch and Brewster argued, the audience was dominated by male, working class immigrants not yet literate in English) and to the hierarchisation of entertainments, genres and, crucially, of looks. Brewster stressed that the invention of the cinema didn't just mean the invention of its technology or the establishment of its industry, but also implied the consolidation (Burch might say 'congealment') of its codes; indeed, Brewster went on to outline the way in which the spectator's look was increasingly implicated in and orchestrated by means of point-of-view inserts and close-ups (eg *Grandma's Reading Glass*), integrated into narrative via voyeuristic devices (eg *Lady's Ankle*) and ultimately employed in an ironic play with a hierarchy of perspectives (eg *The Other Side Of The Hedge*).

If Chanan's approach privileged the modes of production and consumption and the 'content' of early cinema, and Brewster stressed the consolidation of codes and the ideological implications of the increasing reliance on narrative and the orchestration of the three looks (that of the camera to the pro-filmic event, that of the audience to the screen and that between the characters on the screen) Noël Burch tended to de-emphasise the importance of both 'content' and

82 'narrative' and concentrated instead on what he called the unification of and by the spectator by and of cinematic space and time. The crux of Burch's argument, though, was that up until about 1906/7 the cinema was in some sense 'proletarian': 'In its early days the cinema addressed itself exclusively to the urban "lower classes" ' and 'It's practitioners were for the most part still "of humble origin"' (Burch, op cit, p 93) Burch argued that in those early years the middle class had an aversion to the cinema whilst the working class were willing to accept the risks of fire and disease, the constant noise and discomfort, the irritating flicker of the image, the often scatological, sensational material, the anthological format of the average performance (familiar to the proletarian frequenters of fairgrounds, music-halls and circuses but anathema to audiences accustomed to 'legitimate' theatre); the poor quality of the projection; and the overriding informality of the performance (doors always open, people continually coming in and out, conversations going on, smoking, drinking etc).

According to Burch, then, the 'primitive' (proletarian?) cinema — which he characterised by its lack of editing and/or continuity mismatches, its long takes, long shots, frontality and 'infantilism' — began not only to attract working class audiences but actually to cater to them. He cites such films as *The Eviction* and *Les Chiens Contrabandiers* as examples of films with working class protagonists 'winning' against the forces of property and law and order. Of course this anti-authoritarianism was only ever relatively radical, tending to be employed in historic, foreign or fantastic milieux. In 1907, however, this proletarian mode began to be replaced by a 'classless' (ie middle class) one, because, Burch suggests, the recession

of that year encouraged theatre owners to attract additional customers to their box offices. Gradually the cinema was made safe for the middle class — the flicker was eliminated, safety precautions were introduced and enforced (and the legislation that accompanied them laid the path along which the censorship lobby would follow), the audience was 'reconstructed' along the lines of vaudeville, admission prices rose, lecturers were employed to interpret the films to the cine-illiterate middle class, the rich became the protagonists and representations of the poor were increasingly stereo-typed and sentimental. Meanwhile, in production, a strict division of labour involving a hierarchy of cinematic tasks and a clear attribution of responsibility (early 'authorship') began to be introduced. In sum the bourgeoisie had refused to be photographed until it was securely established as proprietor of its own image.

Burch's approach here depends upon some unsubstantiated historical speculations. Eileen Bowser, for instance, one of the film historians contributing to the FIAF conference, whilst agreeing that we should try to keep in mind the context in which the films were shown has argued that until the rise of the nickelodeon theatre in 1905-1906, films were chiefly shown as part of the vaudeville program. She points out that vaudeville historians suggest that the period 1900-1906 was one in which the producers sought a respectable, middle class audience, whilst in the less frequent film venues like the burlesques the working class audience continued to dominate. (Bowser, 'The Brighton Project: An Introduction', *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, Fall 1979, p 512). Clearly Bowser's comments here are only pertinent to the US context

but even so they do seriously undermine Burch's case. Indeed, Bowser's description of several different contexts for (different types of) early film supports Rod Stoneman's argument that 'monolithic' concepts and explanations are inadequate to the complexity of any such cultural practice.

In spite of such reservations, however a class-based approach to both the production and consumption of early film together with both its 'form' and 'content' provides an important counterbalance to conventional histories of early (and indeed all) cinema. Mick Eaton has criticised such histories for collapsing 'the complex determinations operating on the development of early cinema' onto 'the question of a simple transaction between audience and producer' because the emphasis on a unsophisticated audience is usually predicated on an ignorance of the identity and class status of the film-makers. Noël Burch has pointed out that it was also in 1907 that D W Griffith, a middle class intellectual with a background in touring theatre, was first hired by Biograph. Similarly Burch argued of the early cinema in England, that it was the lantern background of the 'gentleman film-makers' — Hepworth, Smith and Paul — that differentiated it from its European and American competitors and that it was in England that, as early as 1902, the conventions of the dominant film language were first formulated. Burch even speculated that the relatively 'retarded' early cinemas of France and Russia were determining factors in the innovations of Gance and Eisenstein.

Considering Burch's cautious attention to detail here and his unwillingness to do more than hypothesise about early cinema, his inflexible indentification of 'post-primitive' cinema as the Institutional

Mode of Production seems a singularly 83
simplistic and monolithic model. Rod Stoneman's presentation on the avant-garde's appropriation of early cinematic devices (as in *After Lumière*, and *Tom the Piper's Son*), on the other hand, argued that neither early cinema, the mainstream mode that largely replaced it, nor the avant-garde itself are monoliths. Stoneman extended this critique to 'the implicit nomination of (any) one textual practice as exemplary'. He saw this as an essentialist/idealist position:

Criteria of value do not transcend their specific historical application . . . Validation must return to discussion of distribution/exhibition practice and the question of the audience.'

Afterimage no 7, 1980.

The implication of this critique is that at times Burch's essentialism is the mirror image of Bazin's. Bazin once warned that 'it would be absurd to take the silent film as a state of primal perfection which has gradually been forsaken by the realism of sound and colour'. He saw that same realism as a primal perfection; Burch sees the latter in realism's antithesis.

Stoneman made the case for the weekend most clearly at the end of his paper when he suggested that:

Arguing for a strategic redeployment of knowledge gained from the study of early cinema, should dispel notions of a 'paradise of diversity lost', a golden era before the hegemony of the codic system which can somehow be regained. The dominant cinema, unstable and contradictory in its specificity, cannot be seen as monolithic or unchanging, as this impedes understanding of the way in which the avant-garde has historically moved in a tangential relationship to it.

84 The weekend afforded an opportunity both for studying examples of that cinema and for several 'strategic redeployments of knowledge' about it. It was useful to have a school organised around contradictory perspectives on concepts of mode of production, audience and authorship. Another important question that was raised was what is bought for the price of a ticket: until now we have been content with John Ellis' formulation that 'paying for the possibility of pleasure' effects 'a perpetual placing of the subject in relation to desire' (Ellis, *The Institution of Cinema, Edinburgh '77 Magazine*, p 57). Chanan more modestly defined the payment at the box office as a simple exchange for the right of admission to view (ie renting a view but not a viewing copy); Brewster, on the other hand, noted that, in America at least, the practices of 'zoning' and 'clearance' began (in the

mid-1900s) with the nickelodeons. (These two terms refer respectively to the regional and temporal assignment of 'runs' or 'playing dates'.) Consequently, he argued, the price of a ticket involves both the location of the cinema (and of the seat paid for in it) and the length of time since first release of the film paid to see; in effect, the customer at the box office is paying for his or her own class position.

A successful weekend, then, and one which unfortunately those who missed it will have no opportunity to catch 'on general release'. Is it not possible that some sort of 'co-production deal' between Regional Arts Associations, SEFT and the BFI could roadshow films and speakers to two or three parts of the country over a short period? We cannot afford to leave the (re)invention of the cinema and the (re) invigoration of film culture to those who can afford to travel to such events.

FILM

QUARTERLY

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has consistently (since 1958) published film criticism and theory focussing closely on real films. It devotes attention to independent films (experimental, documentary, etc.) not covered by other American journals. It also provides, once a year, a giant survey of the flood of English-language film books—currently running at well over a hundred titles a year. However, it is hard to find in bookstores in England and on the continent, and *Screen* readers who might wish to subscribe can obtain a sample copy by writing to the address below. (Subscriptions are whatever is the current sterling equivalent of \$8.00 U.S.)

BFI REGIONAL CONFERENCE

The British Film Institute's Regional Conference (held at Warwick University in September 1980) was a confusing and often incoherent occasion. It isn't difficult to say why this was so. The main subject of the conference, 'Regional Film Culture and Independent Film-making', raised issues which needed time for proper consideration. The limited time available in a weekend for discussion was constricted by two laudable aims. The first was to show examples of independent films made in the regions. These had to be presented as miscellaneous packages in late-night sessions, contradicting everything that was said during the conference about the need to properly present films. The second aim was to give as many voices as possible a chance to be heard. This reached almost ludicrous extremes in the session on film exhibition when the presence of half a dozen people on the platform didn't give them or the audience enough time to discuss their situation properly. Apart from independent film-making, another important subject, the overall relationship between the regions and the BFI, was considered. Since that relationship was already under discussion

in the BFI by officers and governors, it had to be considered, but that further overloaded the week-end. Finally, confusion was created by uncertainty about the overall nature of the conference: Was it a forum for discussion or a policy-formulating body? In an attempt to make the discussions effective the chance to pass resolutions was offered. This led to almost every discussion group feeling obliged to propose a resolution. The result was a final plenary session confronted with sixteen resolutions, almost every one accompanied by a number of amendments. Given the time available it was impossible to discuss the resolutions and amendments so a series of propositions ranging from the unexceptionable to the controversial simply had to be voted on. It was irritating and frustrating to be involved in this confusion and incoherence, but my general impression was that the confusion and incoherence marked a situation that could form the basis of productive discussion in the future.

The main dynamic of the conference was a sense of crisis amongst independent film-makers. This sense was produced by the obvious need to establish a more

86 secure and permanent economic structure for the independent sector and the feeling that unless this was done quickly independent film-making would no longer be possible. A central demand was for a structure that would enable film-makers to be paid on a regular basis. To establish a structure with this potential, a large sum of money (large not in an absolute sense but in terms of the money that has hitherto been available) would have to be found — the discussion document presented by the ACTT and the Regional Arts Association Officers suggested a fund of £600,000.

To justify such a sum two kinds of arguments were offered. The first was a call for justice for the regions, on the basis of the disparity between the money available to the BFI Production Board and that available for regional production. The ACTT-RAA document estimated the disparity as 6 to 1 in favour of the Board. This argument has such obvious force that unless a case is made that regional production should have a different character and purpose from that of the Production Board the only objection to it is practicality — where in the present political situation is the money to come from? Unless new money can be found, the only source is a redistribution of existing money. Such a redistribution would pose hard questions; should money be taken from other areas of the Institute's activities or should some of the Production Board's money be given to the regions (in which case the overall sum available to production wouldn't be increased anyway?).

The second argument was more complex and wide-ranging. It dealt with the whole *raison d'être* of independent film-making. Put crudely and simply, the argument is that independent film-making should get more money because it has a vital

contribution to make to the quality of film and television work in Britain. The attempt to define this contribution at the conference centred on a description of independent cinema as a *cinema of social practice*. In an obvious way this isn't a very helpful description. Every kind of cinema is a form of social practice. It's necessary to specify the kind of social practice British independent cinema aspires to be. I think the implicit suggestion is that independent cinema is a form of *conscious* social practice, an intervention, where most other forms of cinema are *unconscious* practices. This still leaves the problem of defining the nature of that consciousness.

As it emerged from the papers and contributions, it was primarily defined by a series of negatives. A cinema of social practice wasn't Hollywood cinema (or, perhaps more precisely, the sort of British cinema that apes Hollywood, 'mid-Atlantic cinema'), wasn't mass produced, wasn't profit oriented, wasn't European art cinema, wasn't metropolitan dominated. The positives were fewer and less forcefully put. A cinema of social practice would be concerned with the character of contemporary British society, would have a regional character, would belong to the sphere of 'culture'.

The difficulties of this definition are obvious. It can lead to a 'Little-Englandism'; independent cinema is opposed to both Europe and the United States and has no positive international dimension. Then an opposition to entertainment (Hollywood) and art (Europe) leaves independent cinema on an unknown terrain (political education?). Finally by attaching independent cinema to the sphere of culture, the traditional British opposition between culture and commerce may be reproduced. At a conference calling for more money for

independent film-making there wasn't much room for suspicion of commerce.

A week-end conference isn't the place to produce an elaborate philosophy of independent film-making. The main value of this occasion was that the discussion started to take place in the right context. Much the most important feature of the conference was the forces represented there. It was especially encouraging that independent film-workers and regional activists formed a coherent bloc. But as well as this bloc, all those forces crucial to the development of independent film-making, the Regional Arts Associations, the British Film Institute, the ACTT, and television (in the person of Jeremy Isaacs, the Fourth Channel had a presence if only an unofficial one at that point*). The successful development of independent film-work will only occur if a workable alliance can be constructed out of these forces and it was one of the achievements of the week-end that mutual suspicions (what was the ACTT up to? was the BFI seriously committed to regional film production, did independent film-makers think the world owes them a living?) were controlled.

The other main theme of the week-end, the BFI's relationship with the regions, was provoked by a paper on regional policy prepared for the Governors by the head of the new Distribution Division, Colin McArthur. This paper had been criticised by the Governors of the BFI and sent back for revision. The revised paper, which was mainly the work of Anthony Smith, the BFI's new director, was viewed with suspicion by many people at the conference. The report presented by the Regional Film Theatre

and RAA members of the Standing Consultative Committee expressed strong dissatisfaction with it on the grounds that the clear indication of policy in the paper's first draft had evaporated in the new draft. This feeling was part of a more general dissatisfaction with the BFI's inability to articulate its relationship with the regions.

Anthony Smith wasn't able to handle this dissatisfaction. His failure was in part caused by an inability to appreciate the long-term and intense frustration caused by the BFI's difficulty in developing coherent policies. But it was also caused by what seemed to me legitimate opposition on his part to some criticisms which were extravagantly anti-centralist. There were suggestions that the National Film Theatre and the National Film Archive might be closed down and the money devoted to the regions. I think such suggestions are wrong in principle but they also had the confusing effect of diverting attention from strong criticisms of how the NFT especially, currently operates in relation to the regions.

A number of conference motions and amendments proposed consultative mechanisms that would meet the dissatisfactions expressed and would have the ability to effect directly Institute policies towards the regions. Undoubtedly these proposals should be supported but the issue of influencing policies needs to be tackled from another direction as well. Ultimate power in the Institute does belong to the Governors. The basic mechanism by which Governors are appointed (ministerial choice) usually results in a group which isn't particularly responsive to the Institute's active constituencies. A small move towards making the Governing body more responsive was made when the election of two governors by Institute members

* His appointment as Chief Executive to the Fourth Channel was announced shortly after the conference.

88 was agreed to. I see no reason why this shouldn't be extended by, say, the election of two Governors annually at the Regional Conference thus giving the Regions a direct voice in the formulation of Institute policy.

During the discussion of the Institute/regional relationship, Anthony Smith made the point that the regions and film production were the only two areas of the Institute's activities to get growth money. I felt this point wasn't sufficiently appreciated — it indicated that the Institute isn't completely impervious to the needs of independent film-makers and regional activists.

At the present time it is important to make a careful estimate of the Institute's character. Under Smith's direction,

changes are being made. It is too early to say how substantial these changes are and what direction they will take the BFI. An obvious danger is that the Institute will become decisively metropolitan oriented, looking in one direction towards the world of prestige film production and international festivals (the gigantism of the current London Film Festival is a warning sign) and in another towards the restricted world of established media research and journalism (the *Guardian* lectures are another warning sign). To ensure that, at the very least, the Institute continues to look in a direction sympathetic to the needs of independent film-workers and regional activists will require a consistent and intelligent campaign.

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IAN CONNELL

89

EDINBURGH TV FESTIVAL

Though several of the main sessions raised some important issues, and some, especially the sessions on 'kids' television' and on women in broadcasting indicated points of tension and dispute, there was little in any session which addressed directly questions of 'television and the real world' (the title of the conference). While it may seem that it would be appropriate, given such a title, to raise questions about representation and about televisual modes of signifying 'reality' and the conditions under which televisual discourses can appear as 'windows-on-the-world', what little discussion there was of these issues in open session was forced and fragmentary. It was, evidently, foreign to the preferred terrains of discourse.

Questions of representation were, for the most part, raised by those who were, broadly, familiar with *Screen's* critical discourses on the subject. Many of the criticisms mounted drew on what are to readers of *Screen* familiar themes. However, the manner in which these criticisms were formulated tended to confirm their supposed foreign-ness; they were all too readily classifiable as esoteric,

as extraneous to the main or 'real' business of making better programmes.

The marginalisation of a critical investigation of television dominant modes of representation can, no doubt in part be attributed to the pragmatism that typically accompanies a 'professional' engagement with broadcasting. But this marginalisation was also a consequence of the absence of any sense of tactics on the part of the critics. Instead of attempting to raise questions about representation in an apposite way, they opted instead for a kind of ideological *blitzkrieg* — an all-out, all-or-nothing, frontal assault with no quarter given. While many of the so-called 'radical academics' complained that Rod Allen's (the organiser) 'denigration' of their 'analytical contributions' bordered on the hysterical, they failed to realise that they had played a part in this by maintaining a position of pristine ideological purity.

This exemption from self-criticism, and the transference of blame onto the broadcasters or onto the admittedly bad organisation of sessions may be comforting, but hardly productive. Its logic is to abandon the space, to continue

90 to work in a critical isolation. But critical intervention need not be of the order practised at Edinburgh this year, and I would imagine from some of the comments made, in previous years. It is foolhardy to imagine that in a moment, magically, professional broadcasters will abandon their 'common-sense' for semiological scientificity. Instead we should attempt to seek out and subvert the moments of lapse and tension within that common-sense. Practically we should not start out from somewhere within the critical discourses located in *Screen* or in similar journals, but from within the common-sense of the broadcasters.

Our critical interventions cannot be simply negative — geared exclusively to

castigate broadcasters for what they have done or failed to do. Carl Gardner in *Time Out* denigrated the attempts made by several broadcasters and Michael Grade in particular to wheel discussions round to the question of making 'better programmes'. In his view 'thus do those in power reduce all threatening issues to the level of the practical'. But practical changes and transformations are presumably what all the critical theoretical work is ultimately designed to produce. So, more attention should be given to subverting what is and might be understood by 'better programmes', to formulating positive criticism before we decide that the Television Festival is no place for us.

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MICHAEL O'PRAY

ON ADRIAN STOKES AND FILM AESTHETICS

Adrian Stokes died in London in December 1972 at the age of seventy. Penguin, in the same year, published his selected writings¹ edited and with an excellent introduction by Richard Wollheim. This volume served as well as could be expected for a writer whose style resists and suffers from editing, and satisfied an overriding need to make accessible, even if fragmentary, writings long out of print of a major influence on English culture. The collection of Stokes' critical writings by Lawrence Gowing² brings together for the first time (in three volumes) Stokes' major works, stretching from *The Quattro Cento*, first published in 1932, to the writings of the 1960s, including *Reflections on the Nude* and *Painting and the Inner World*.

Stokes is intimately associated with Ruskin and Pater in style, interest and approach and to this extent is firmly within the English tradition of aesthetics and art criticism, with one major difference traceable to Stokes' encounter with psychoanalysis in the 1920s.³ During this period, Stokes' interest in psychoanalysis and his intensive reading

of Freud's major works found its echoes in his ideas on art, but it was not until Stokes' analysis with Melanie Klein, which he begun in 1929, that the influence of these ideas on his aesthetics began to make itself felt, particularly in the

1 *The Image in Form: Selected Writings of Adrian Stokes*, ed Richard Wollheim, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1972.

2 *The Critical Writings of Adrian Stokes*, ed Lawrence Gowing, Thames and Hudson, 1978.
Volume I, 1930-1937, Pisanello, The Quattro Cento, Stones of Rimini, Reviews of Modern Art. Volume II, 1937-1958, Colour and Form, Venice, Inside Out, Art and Science, Smooth and Rough, Cezanne, Raphael, and Monet. Volume III, 1955-1967, Michelangelo, Greek Culture and the Ego, The Paintings of Our Time, Coldstream and the Sitter, The Impact of Architecture, Painting and the Inner World, The Invitation in Art, Reflections on the Nude.

3 This biographical detail has been culled from Richard Wollheim's 'Adrian Stokes, critic, painter, poet' in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 17 February 1978, and his introduction to *The Image in Form*, op cit.

92 Tavistock series of the 1950s and 1960s.

It is in part to Klein's theories that Stokes' later writings especially owe their singularity in aesthetics.

Stokes' distinctive use of Kleinian psychoanalytical concepts in his aesthetics makes his work relevant to current debates among film and art theorists sympathetic to *Screen's* work. In particular representation and the role of phantasy in art in relation to the spectator are two general issues connected to Stokes' own enquiries.

In this introductory article I will briefly examine his views broadly as they relate to film aesthetics and more specifically to the 'two avant-gardes' debate and questions of realism and classical American narrative film. Before doing this, it is necessary to make some remarks on Klein and Lacan in relation to Stokes' ideas.

Lacan's articulation of the order of the Imaginary takes much from Kleinian ideas about the nature, content and structure of infantile phantasies comprising that order, though Lacan has reservations about the Kleinian construction of the ego and the lack in her theory of any notion of the signifier. The nature of the difference between Klein and Lacan and the possibility of any assimilation of one to the other has not yet been debated.⁴

Two important digressions: My suggestion that prominent figures and

movements in British culture such as Stokes, Klein and the English school of psychoanalysis should be studied from a progressive left viewpoint is made in the context of an attempt to develop an alternative socialist strategy in this country. The defining texts for this project whilst not coming to any definitive conclusions open the left debate on quite specific issues.⁵ Of necessity new perspectives on socialist politics will entail a reassessment of cultural strategies which will include a more serious attempt to engage cultural positions in the present conjuncture.

The issue of left cultural hegemony in this country is more marginal or at least of a different order than is the issue of textuality to the recuperation of figures such as Klein, Stokes, Ruskin, Pater. Compared with other aestheticians, Ruskin, Pater and Stokes went far beyond the demands of description of works of art and the formalist application of art theory to them. Their writings were highly imbricated presentations and articulations of their appropriate objects in terms of the associations and feelings (the phantasies we might say) which determined their understanding of those objects. The openness and sense of display in their work denotes them as textual producers.

Stokes' developed general position is summed up in his own words in *Reflections on the Nude*:

There is a sense in which all art is of the body, particularly so in the eyes of

4 An exception is the exchange between Wollheim and the Lacan Study Group in *NLR* 93 and 97 and Wollheim's 'The Cabinet of Dr Lacan' in *The New York Review of Books* 25 January 1979. Metz's use of Kleinian concepts in 'The Imaginary Signifier' *Screen* vol 16 no 2 proved more of an embarrassment than a point for discussion in MacCabe's 'Presentation' of it.

5 Especially Purdy and Prior, *Out of the Ghetto*, Nottingham, Spokesman, 1979; *Politics and Power* vol 1; conclusion to *Marx's Capital and Capitalism Today*, Cutler, Hindess, Hirst and Hussain, RKP, 1978.

those who accept that the painted surface and other media represent as a general form, which their employment particularizes, the actualities of the hidden psychic structures made up of evaluations and fantasies with corporeal content.

For Stokes, this phantasy in art was not simply a matter of content but always of the formal aspects of art. In the same piece he argues for the view that:

Formal relationships themselves entail a representation or imagery of their own though these likenesses are not as explicit as the images we obtain from what we call the subject-matter.

This emphasis on the formal aspect of art did not involve the incorporation of the formal into the content allowing both to be interpreted in the way of a piece of dream analysis, tracing desires, feelings and phantasies in the art object back to their source in the artist as Freud did, for example, in his essay on Leonardo da Vinci. Rather, Stokes developed his aesthetics in relation to the spectator's relationship with the art object (and for him the producer of the object was also in the most celebrated cases, a spectator too), where what was at stake was the aesthetic level of the relationship. Hence, there was a refusal to reduce art to the historical or sociological although it was central to his view that art was primarily a piece of work defined and determined by its practices and social institutions. In other words, the significance of art is never simply a question of the significance lent it by the individual artist but of the medium's appropriateness as a form of projection for both artist and spectator.

To understand what this projection 93 meant we must turn to Klein. Psychic structure for her was dominated by two positions or organisations of the ego: the paranoid-schizoid position and the depressive position. Briefly, the paranoid-schizoid position is the earliest phase of infantile development, characterised by the ego's relation to part objects, its tendency to splitting and the dominance of paranoid anxiety where the breast and penis are phantasised as primarily bad objects on to which the infant's aggressive feelings are projected, only to return as attacks upon the infant. The depressive position is established with the infant's recognition of the mother as a whole object. Object relations and their attendant anxieties are organised in this position by an attacking yet loved mother and by the infant's fear of losing the mother — both internally and externally. Pain, guilt and a sense of loss are characteristic here, together with the activity of reparation necessary to repair and restore a loved injured object.

This short account by no means does justice to the complexity and richness of Klein's theory,⁶ nevertheless it must suffice as a schematic outline and background for a discussion of Stokes' aesthetics. Although it was a tendency throughout his work, it was only with his later writings — the Tavistock series: *Michaelangelo* (1955), *Greek Culture and the Ego* (1958), *Three Essays on the Painting of Our Time* (1961), *Painting and the Inner World* (1963), *The Invitation in Art* (1965), *Reflections on the Nude* (1967) — that he associated in the most

6 See *The Writings of Melanie Klein* vols I-IV, Hogarth Press, London. Also Klein, H Segal, Fontana, 1979 and *Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein* H Segal, Heinemann, 1964.

94 rigorous and satisfying way the two positions in Klein with the two traditions or modes in art — that of *modelling* and *carving*. Briefly, carving is a 'cutting away' and modelling or moulding is a 'building up'. The carving tradition is usually associated with the idea of the form being already present in the stone block awaiting its release by the artist's chisel, suggesting a respect for the integrity of the stone's expressive capacities. On the other hand, the modelling tradition with its use of moulds and brass and bronze exemplifies the belief that genuine creativity involves creating from nothing.

For Stokes, the carving tradition comprised and was given exemplary expression by Alberti, Piero della Francesca, Gorgione, Vermeer, Cezanne. It was associated with the depressive position and thus was the articulation in phantasy of the whole object and the integrated ego. The art object bears the phantasy of the whole object's otherness and externality. The modelling mode represented opposing aspects and was to be connected with the paranoid-schizoid position. For many years Stokes had treated the latter tradition as inferior to the carving one⁷ but eventually he came to recognise its qualities in its powerful invitation to the spectator.

The modelling mode involved, paradigmatically, sharp transitions and a profusion of internal differentiation so as to render forms precise, distinct and separate, having their effect by a cumulative process or by the use of an overall organising device eg *chiaroscuro* in painting. Such a mode of representation enforces a dependency by the spectator

on the piece of art which thereby loses its separateness and the externality so celebrated in the carving mode. This loss Stokes described as the 'incantatory' in art or the 'invitation' in art by which the spectator is enveloped by the object. The modelling mode or tradition with its more fragmentary nature articulates and establishes primarily part object relations with their tendency to internalisation and paranoid attack. It was the mark of Stokes' later work that he came to see that all art was constituted by both components — the aggressive attacks on the canvas or stone and the struggle to repair that damage was always present as the movement towards balance where the image in form might be sustained.

Stokes' aesthetics provides some method of articulating the distinction between, broadly considered, a *realist* and what may be unsatisfactorily called, *montage* cinema. The distinction in terms of the concepts of modelling and carving operates by way of differences in formal technique and spectator phantasy projection, thereby evading the traditional expositions of realism, for instance, by ontology or ideology. Mark Nash in his essay on Dreyer has made implicit suggestions along these lines: *The aesthetics of montage posed problems for Dreyer largely resolved by the introduction of sound. He wanted Joan of Arc to be a sound film because the découpage effected on the body of the film and representationally on Joan's body, demanded a reparation within the film in the form of music and the sound of the human voice. The reparation of the body in pieces not only restores narcissism, but reconstitutes the body of the mother from the infant's sadistic, punishing attacks.*⁸

7 See *Stones of Rimini* particularly for Stokes early bias against the modelling tradition and celebration of the carving in Agostino.

8 Dreyer, M Nash, BFI, 1977 p 31.

In a footnote to this passage, Nash elliptically suggests that 'this hypothesis casts a new light on the Bazinian arguments in favour of realism'. Dreyer's use of sound (musical and vocal) as a reparation for the fragmentation of the image and diegetic character (the result of attacks on the celluloid film strip and Joan) complies with Stokes' idea of the modelling tradition (paralleled in montage) where an overriding device is necessitated in order to integrate the 'internal differentiations'. As we shall see, the parallels between the two dualisms, carving/modelling and realism/montage can be reconstituted almost throughout.

It must be stressed that for Stokes, the two modes came to symbolise the most benign aspects of the relationship they reflected, but with the presence in some form and to some degree of the more aggressive and painful side of the relationship. In the carving mode, therefore, the self-sufficiency of the whole object, even if dominant, entails the depression and pain and need for reparation found in that relationship. Similarly, in the modelling mode with its celebration of the 'oceanic feeling' once felt by the infant at the breast and now the means of the incantatory in that mode, exists also the splitting and attackings moments of that relationship.

Within a short article it is difficult to focus upon any one particular aspect of the relationship of Stokes' aesthetics to film but certain points are worth making. In reference to Peter Wollen's polemic on two avant-gardes in cinema — one stemming from a fine art tradition and the other from radical narrative cinema — where the conflict between the two positions and practices has seemed insurmountable, Stokes can be seen to offer an aesthetic which

cuts across both positions, at least at 95 the level of aesthetics and the spectator relationship. Stokes' notion of phantasy and the image in form is not constrained by the figurative or representational in art — in fact his work has been in many ways a struggle against such a view of art tied to superficial humanist and anthropomorphic prejudices. Stokes' concepts of the carving and modelling modes point to ways of prising realism, for instance, from its conventional meaning and explication in film theory, giving it a fuller and wider application.

Modelling in art involves the less integrated formal elements of the form of specific paintings, pieces of sculpture and so on. These works of art pull us in to them, they envelop the spectator. This *invitation* in art depends upon the form and not the content of the works in question. Certain characteristics are ascribed to the modelling mode. The surface (canvas, stone) suffers attacks, involving a great emphasis on depth, a strong irregularity of stress, contrasts of illumination or lighting are harsh, representation of movement is common and different elements are often unconnected — to be brought together by some overriding technique or sleight of composition. In these features of modelling or 'invitation' it is not too difficult to discern aspects of what has been termed 'montage' cinema (and this includes much of classical Hollywood film). In a medium which it could be argued is already essentially 'envelopmental' just through its conditions of exhibition alone, such a cinema has been incantatory to the extreme. Its excessive use of the close-up and shot/reverse-shot to relay the spectator by means of identification mechanisms through the film also serves to make irregular

96 stresses, to attack the body of the film through the editing required by these techniques. Such a cinema also stresses depth either through depth of field or illusionistic devices found in the expressionist and theatrical pieces of 1930s film in Germany and Hollywood. Lastly, it is also characterised by the harshness of lighting in its contrasts, stressed in the use of *chiaroscuro* technique which, in turn, is one means together with music of reconciling the various distinct elements. This cinema is typified by its use of identification by which the spectator is drawn into the film thus denying the self-sufficiency and externality or otherness of the film. In order to achieve this enveloping effect, attacks of the kind stated accompany or, more strictly, comprise its invitation — formal attacks often further represented within the diegesis, as in the Dreyer example.

The carved mode finds its realisation, I suggest, in realist cinema specially the Italian neo-realist cinema. The carving tradition for Stokes was characterised by the self-sufficiency of its object, attained through a love for the material. In painting and sculpture this meant an attention to the texture, the use of inner light, and the even progression of surfaces. Through these elements the externality and wholeness of the intact object was celebrated. Roy Armes, discussing Italian neo-realism, speaks of a style 'virtually free from *chiaroscuro* effects or expressionistic devices and which at times — as with Rossellini — achieved an almost newsreel simplicity'.⁹ The use of long shots and a reluctance to use quick editing sequences shows a respect for the

material and, in consequence, for reality (cinema is unique in this intimacy between the material and reality which explains many of the problems found in Bazin and Metz, for instance). The refusal to use the identificatory devices to draw in the spectator and instead to use primarily medium and long shots of characters where identification is replaced more by 'object-choice proper', where diegetic characters are less fragmented and which stresses externality of the film — the sense that one is *not* in it and that there is some distance established without any necessary loss of affective response — all these features explain its closeness to the carving traditions.

Finally it is important in the Italian neo-realist cinema and especially the films of Rossellini who has been singled out here (Renoir might merit similar descriptions) for the uniqueness of that cinema has been the natural light¹⁰ found in Italy — the light which Stokes describes in *Stones of Rimini* —

a luminous whiteness . . . common to sea, to road, to house. Stone gleams, the dust is white: what is of dark hue is dark, what is darker is blacker without mitigation.

In the Mediterranean lands, for Stokes, in such a light 'things stand'. This light is at one with the projection screen's luminosity and preserves that luminosity and retains its integrity as a lit surface. *Bicycle Thieves, Paisa, Voyage to*

9 R Armes, *Patterns of Realism*, Tantivy Press, London, 1971 p 192.

10 Note Rivette's remark about Rossellini's 'predilection for large white surfaces' and its relationship to painting (especially Matisse) and realism in *Rivette*, ed Jonathan Rosenbaum, BFI, 1977.

Italy, Salvatore Giuliano — all exemplify the carving mode in cinema. Of course it is not unimportant that these films are black and white. Most films will encompass both modes and the modelling mode is not inferior to the carving — *Citizen Kane*, *Battleship Potemkin*, *Psycho* and *The Searchers* are all in the modelling mode although Ford's use of lighting and medium/long shots suggest strong elements of the carving tradition.

The force of Stokes' work, only briefly hinted at here, is his articulation of representation in art as one primarily of form and phantasy — phantasies of the artist, spectator and the medium itself — where the piece of art is always a body — bountiful, loved, loving, attacked, attacking, whole, fragmented. A body always caught in the moment of the movement between wholeness and fragmentation — the structure of the Imaginary.

Spectatorship and subjectivity in film has been the site of major theoretical discussion over the past few years, centring mainly on classical narrative American film and notions such as point-of-view, the look, camera movement and diegetic analysis in psychoanalytical terms. *Mise-en-scène* and avant-garde film, for instance, have received little attention partly due to the constraints intrinsic to the theory being applied where the notion of phantasy operating is restricted to the diegetic level mediated through quite formal procedures such as shot/reverse-shot. This theoretical

view is mute before realist and avant-garde cinema. Perspective, colour, lighting, camera position and movement, shot duration and so on may be better understood if the notion of phantasy used is less concerned with diegetic character and plot and more with the articulation of the film as both *visual* medium and narrative. In other words, the terms or elements in the phantasy and its structure are not necessarily the subjects conceived as diegetic personages — colours, movement, inanimate objects, *mise-en-scène* can all be constitutive elements. Too much in current approaches is reminiscent of the orthodox Freudian method of art criticism and interpretation where analysis of the text becomes the ascription of beliefs, desires and phantasies to the diegetic characters and by a very easy move to the author.

It is clear that Stokes' aesthetic renders realism and 'montage' cinema conventionally understood largely redundant as aesthetic categories. Whether a film represents reality is a question which loses its centrality at this level. The range of application of the concepts of carving and modelling can be seen to be considerable. However whether other problems, for instance, those concerning the place of signification can be resolved in this account remains to be seen. In the meantime, this article, it is hoped, has identified some of the ideas in Stokes relevant to film theory and also provided some suggestions as to how they may be constructively developed within *Screen's* concerns.

Sandy Flitterman and Judith Barry write:

As authors of 'Textual Strategies: The Politics of Art-making' (*Screen* vol 21, no 2 1980), we would like to express our dissatisfaction with the fact that we were not consulted on editorial or stylistic changes made to our article. The copy-edited article simply went to press without our ever having seen it.

While the basic thrust of our discussion remains intact, the published article appears in a style that we cannot possibly feel comfortable with. The introductory paragraph was intended to *contextualise* the notion of feminist art among other critical discourses, and to emphasise the *political* necessity of theory. The opening paragraph should have read as follows:

To say that there is a crisis in contemporary criticism might seem like overstating the case for a situation in which critical definitions and methods merely lack precision and rigour. Yet it cannot be disputed that in terms of the feminist issue of the representation of women and the figuration of female sexuality in art, a crisis does exist. In order to develop a truly effective feminist artistic practice, one that works toward productive social change, it is necessary to understand the question of representation as a political question, to have an analysis of women's subordination within patriarchal forms of representation.

Changes of a less serious nature abound, 101
'an artworld notion of beautiful pain, distanced suffering, and a whole legacy of exquisite female martyrdom' reads simply 'an artworld notion of pain as beautiful' in the published article. Some changes simply produce instances of bad writing (unnecessary commas, pronouns without antecedents in the text, repetitious phrasing). Others, by eliminating the major line of argumentation, make some discussions sound like prescriptive jargon.

Without necessarily subscribing to a division (which is always ideological) between form and content, we would like to point out that while changes of this sort do not seriously alter the *meaning* or political position of our article, they substantially change its *style*. We would therefore like to suggest that authors be shown copy-edited versions of their articles *before* publication.

We are sorry that we were not able to consult Sandy Flitterman and Judith Barry about the editorial changes to their article. Our usual practice is to clear major changes of the kind they refer to before proceeding to typesetting. Just before going to press an accompanying and contextualising piece did not appear. In this new situation we thought some changes necessary, but there was not sufficient time to contact the authors.

[MN]

Errata Volume 21 Number 3

p29 stills nos 1 and 3 should be inverted

p97 second column the first five lines should come *after* the final four lines

p104 for *Star Wars* read *The Empire Strikes Back*